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THE ENGLISH 1909-1922

FRANK FOX

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THE ENGLISH

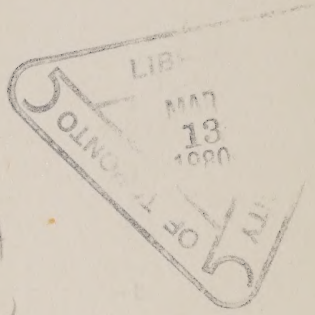
1909-1922

A GOSSIP

By FRANK FOX

57724

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1923



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IN EXPLANATION

DURING the war on once coming to London for a few days' leave from Flanders, it was a luxury to lie abed of mornings and read several papers. They all had very many columns about the war, and I learned of what fine things the Indians were doing, and the Canadians and the Scottish and the Australians. Much reading of this made me a little mad and I broke, I do not know how many, King's Regulations and lost two good hours of idleness by writing about it to the *Spectator*.

In this letter I related a great discovery I had made on going to the Front: that there were a curious people called the English fighting there. I asserted with some vehemence that this was a fact, though one never saw mention of it in the English papers. In proof I described in some detail their manners and customs.

It was, perhaps, the first authentic news in any English newspaper of the presence of the English on the battle front, and it was received with some welcome; and if the authorship of the disclosure were traced to me no disciplinary action was taken.

Tempted by that, I dare now give these gossiping impressions of the past thirteen years—before the war, during the war and after the war—in which I have been studying the English on their "world front." Will it be of interest to these English people—who are so sure of themselves

that they can reach to a sublime degree at once of self-effacement and of disregard for what men say —to know how they seem in the eyes of a citizen of one of their children nations ? In peace and in war and in the feverish convalescence that followed the wounds of war ?

I make the venture.

Some doubts had to be overcome before I decided that in giving an impression of the Mother-country from the point of view of an Australian, I could not exclude all observations of personalities. I was aware of the danger ; I did not wish to be classed among the spies of the luncheon table. Yet the alternative was dreary : to write of landscapes without life, houses without inhabitants, institutions without the human beings who worked them. So the dangerous course was taken. But I have tried to avoid alike malice and flattery.

Because this book is branded " A Gossip," no one, I hope, will look for a considered study. I have recorded a glimpse here, a glimpse there, as I caught them, of English people of different types ; in easy times and in harsh times ; and with only this one connecting link that I have sought to notice those things which showed the character, the nature, of the race as it went about its work in life.

One more explanation. I do not write forgetting that there are Scots and Irish and Welsh in the United Kingdom, nor use the word " English " wrongly for British. It is of the English, not the British, that I attempt a *genre* sketch.

FRANK FOX.

London, August, 1923.

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THE ENGLISH, 1909-1922

CHAPTER I

A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY (1909)

It is the peoples of the new lands of the world in these days that have the explorer's joy. For the men of the older civilisations there exist no longer pathless forests nor uncharted seas. One may book at Cook's to go overland from Cairo to the Cape, and the Andes are being crossed by railways. But the lands of history—the thickets of their cities populous with ghosts—offer to the citizens of the young nations such enchantments as an old-time adventurer had when his prow cut an unknown sea, or his helmet lightened first the gloom of an African forest.

When I started from Australia to explore the old home of our race, chance rather than a settled plan led me to take the path across the Pacific and to approach England by way of America. The chance was a happy one, for a glimpse at America is a good preparation for a study of English institutions. The contrast between the United States and England is sharp, sharper than that between Australia and England, sharper even than that between some European countries and England. London, Paris, Sydney are more of the one type than are London and New York.

I had a first prompting to notice something of the contrast between the American and the English types before I had touched the American continent, by observing the difference of conditions in our colony of Fiji and the American colony of Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean. Suva, the capital of Fiji, is a quiet little place, getting something of an Indian atmosphere from the presence in the streets of the Hindu coolies imported to work in the sugar fields. Its architecture is like that of an English town and suggests a white population taking up residence in a place of exile, doing its duty sturdily there, perhaps for a whole life-time ; but with a backward-turning thought for the Home Country. The English govern the Fijians and the Hindus in Fiji with firmness, with patience and without undue fuss. The most serious trouble I heard of was the necessity to check the extreme devotion of the native Fijians to cricket, a devotion which threatened to turn to naught all efforts to coax them into the path of settled industry. The administration was unobtrusive, sympathetic, but alien, something superimposed upon the native life.

Honolulu, the American capital of Hawaii, showed in strong contrast. It is a city of bustling commercial life, with gigantic hotels, electric trams, scare-head newspapers, and other evidences of the vigorous, assertive, American nationalism. It also has evidences of the fluidity of the American type in its American adaptions of Hawaiian manners. The architecture of Honolulu, for example, is marked by an artistic mingling of modern American with ancient Hawaiian forms. There are a few buildings which are " 100 per cent.

American," but even they make the concession to the climate of flat promenade roofs. The majority of the villas and hotels adapt the native Hawaiian to the modern American architecture, as, for example, the Moana hotel, its chief living-rooms built on piles raising it above a surf beach, its lines and scheme of decoration suggesting a glorified type of native house. The comfort of its dining-room, with the sea murmuring below and sending its coolness up beneath a louvred floor; the æsthetic harmony of the whole building with the tropical jungle surrounding it, were won by the willingness of the American to learn from the Hawaiian.

The dull, unsuitable English houses built for the white inhabitants in the towns of Fiji show that the colonist there wishes to learn nothing from the Fijian, is determined to be English, to be ignorant that there is any possible improvement on English modes.

In the very hot "back country" and the tropical north of Australia, the same stiffness of national habit can be observed. The colonist builds an English house, wears—with a few reluctant concessions—English types of clothing; eats roast beef on Sundays; and on Christmas Day, with the glass at ninety-nine in the shade, there appears at his table a plum pudding made in the traditional manner, with not one burning spice spared, wreathed in flames of spirit, crowned with holly (sometimes artificial, but sometimes real holly which has been guarded from the summer heat in an ice-house).

It is easy at first to conclude that much more sensible is the American adaptiveness than the

English stubbornness. After a longer reflection one is not so sure. Has not this very stubbornness, this certainty that the English thing is unchangeably right and that the foreigner can teach the Englishman nothing, something to do with the moral success of the English rule of inferior races? Would the "Raj" have been established in India had the English conquerors there been of an adaptive type? Was it not founded, in part, on the Englishman's stubborn belief that every habit he had was the best of all habits under all circumstances—this belief combined with a sense of good-humoured, contemptuous tolerance that forbade any attempt to interfere with the silly habits of less well-informed peoples?

I believe that the English success in colonisation is due to the fixity of the English character, which is built on these two pillars—an arrogant self-certainty and a wise tolerance. The English governor of the heathen abroad refuses to believe in the possibility of learning anything from the heathen; and that helps the heathen to come to a conception of his master as god-like. The English governor is also too good-hearted and good-humoured, *and* too certain of the hopelessness of the task, to attempt to make the heathen like unto himself; and so he never fusses, and he interferes as little as possible. That helps the heathen to conclude that he is an amiable and not a capricious god.

The good faculty of silence that the Englishman possesses is another advantage. Savage races dislike and distrust talkers. To be able to keep one's mouth shut in all the dead and all the living languages is a much more valuable

attribute in an administrator than "the gift of tongues."

In Fiji the slow and unadaptive Englishman seems to make the natives fairly happy. All the grumbling that I heard was from members of the British colony. In Hawaii, the natives were discontented, though they have been Americanised to the extent that they enjoy ice-cream soda, a political system modelled on that of an American State, and the ministrations of hot-gospellers, one of whom at the time of my visit was drawing crowds with his

PUNGENT PREACHMENTS
FOR
PRACTICAL PEOPLE

(I quote from the advertisement).

Almost every Hawaiian I talked with in Honolulu was a seditious fellow, full of eloquent arguments that the American was a tyrant and an oppressor. There is no actual danger in this sedition, for the Hawaiian begins from early manhood to grow inordinately fat, and fat men do not make revolutions. But it was interesting to note that the very actions which one would have expected to have been conciliatory and ingratiating on the part of the American conquerors were given as reasons for discontent. Where the American had approved and adapted a Hawaiian custom or art, it was proof that the American was an inferior being who had to learn from the Hawaiian.

But I am on a voyage to discover England, and it is a far cry from Westminster to the South

Seas. I can plead in excuse for the digression that England is to be found, and studied, wherever the Union Jack flies ; and that there was deep interest in the first opportunity that offered of comparing the English method of government with a foreign method. That English method I had had already good chances of studying in other parts of Oceania, but I had not before had the benefit of a means of comparison. I can recall committing myself some years ago to a somewhat bad-tempered (but I still think just) appreciation of that English method :—

> "The Englishman—the superbly arrogant Englishman . . . desires none of the accidental and external signs of greatness. It for him suffices if he has the real power. And he worships the work rather than the glory of the work. In ruling the blind heathen, more fussy people fail because they wish to 'set him right,' to induce the barbarian to become as they are. The Englishman does not wish to set people right. He is right ; that suffices. It is not possible for inferior races ever to be like him ; it is better to let them wallow. . . .
>
> "The imperturbable Englishman is thus willing to let you have your own way on all non-essentials. His attitude—towards your follies and ideals alike—is one of tolerant contempt. So long as you are doing satisfactorily the one thing that he wants of you, the rest of your life is your own, and you may fill it with caste divisions, religious rows, national aspirations, societies for being very proud of the fact that you are not English, or Ogre-worship. He will

not worry. Indeed, he will, if that seems suitable to his purpose, subsidise your Chief Priest of Ogre-worship."

The subsidy to the Chief Priest of Ogre-worship was an effort in fun. But I joked better than I knew. In one part of the South Seas, where sorcery is a great evil—some cunning and lazy member of the tribe pretending to have the gift of the "Evil Eye" and thus establishing a lucrative reign of terror over his fellows—I found that an English administrator had solved the problem by organising rival sorcerers and making them exercise a counter-witchcraft in the interests of public order and progress, this at salaries of about two shillings a week.

A comparative study of the English method of dealing with inferior races and other methods, forces the conclusion that what appear to be its absurdities are in actual fact means to efficiency. As an Australian I own that I have been helped to this conclusion by the fact that it is no longer the custom in England to treat Australians and other colonists too palpably as "inferior races."

* * * * *

Canada I found unexpectedly different from Australia and—so far as could be judged from her politicians—looking at Imperial affairs from a different angle. Sir Wilfred Laurier was then in power (1909), and I still remember his gently paternal snub when in talking with him I raised the question of organisation for Imperial defence. He was emphatic that Canada's share of the task of Imperial defence was to cultivate her wheat

lands and build her railways. Armies and navies were rather vulgar expressions of patriotism.

It was later to be made clear that Sir Wilfred Laurier did not represent the true national spirit of Canada. But I left Canada with the thought that when the then-gathering war storm burst, there was not much to expect from her.

* * * * *

It was, on the whole, with an unquiet mind that I faced the Atlantic voyage to the Mother-country. Let me explain the reason for that, though it may give some impression of presumption.

I believed—and a very great number of Australians believed then—that the Empire was growing old at its English heart. The course of the South African war and the disclosure during its development of a world-wide jealousy and even hatred of the British Empire had suggested to Australians who studied Imperial affairs (and despite his Antipodean position, the average Australian is a very keen student of Imperial and foreign affairs) that a grave crisis was coming, and that there was a clear necessity to "come together" to meet it. The Australian has by nature a good conceit of himself and, judging the rest of the Empire by his own standards, he was quite confident that a united Empire could face any event unafraid. But he saw no signs of an attempt to organise for effective unity.

After the South African war, he was more than dubious about the policy which sent Chinese labour to South Africa. Why not have migrated British miners who would have votes and who could carry rifles? And, seeing that clearly the

rest of the world did not accept the British colonisation of the best parts of the globe as a wise and providential dispensation, why was not England giving a bold lead to all her children to get ready for the coming struggle ?

Subsequently Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's call to seek closer Imperial unity by the path of closer trade organisation restored for a time faith in the commonsense of the Mother-country. This seemed to be a good, sensible move, and Australia was keen to back it up. Then, to her astonishment, she found that the Mother-country was not of that mind after all ; that Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and those who thought with him were driven out of office, and that the real expression of British opinion was apparently that of Mr. Winston Churchill, who saw in that movement for a closer Imperial unity " a conspiracy against the food of the British poor," and boasted that he had " banged and bolted and barred the door " in the face of the conspirators.

During the first years of the twentieth century the feeling grew in the minds of many Australians that the Mother-country " had had her day " and was lapsing into invalidism. They saw the sea-power of Germany growing, the strength of the rivals of British industry growing, and Great Britain feebly mumbling incantations at the shrines of old Manchester fetishes.

Then came simultaneously, the impudent challenge of the Germanic Powers when Austria-Hungary tore up the Berlin Treaty and threw its pieces in our face, and the disclosure of the German naval programme. And still no movement to prepare from Great Britain !

An Australian approaching Liverpool in the spring of 1909, I had serious thoughts that the dutiful course for a grateful child of a parent who had been a most generous and kindly guardian would be, like another Solomon Eagle, to pass through the streets of London crying "Woe." It was a comfort to think that Australia was building an Australian navy and setting up a system of universal training for military service. In Australia, when the world war came, we at any rate would be ready. Canada would not; but she could shelter under the skirts of the United States. England would not; but if she were destroyed, perhaps a remnant of her people would find the old flag still flying in the Antipodes and take shelter there to build up a new British Commonwealth.

Yes, Australia was the Wee Free Church where alone the Imperial faith was held and practised in its true purity.

"Presumptuous," the reader may comment. And truly with better understanding I came to think more moderately. But I confess to my thoughts as they were then: they explain the mood in which I came to observe England and the English.

* * * * *

I was taken up at the outset in the gracious atmosphere of an English welcome; had enough time to make some direct observations and to correct some grave misconceptions, and fortunately did not "rush into print." I found that England was not old and doddering but still in most respects young and vigorous.

But in two respects I remained obstinately pessimistic until 1914. It seemed to me quite certain that England was woefully wrong in not making adequate preparations for the coming storm (I ventured to say this first in public on May 24, 1909, at Windsor and thereafter at every possible opportunity until August, 1914); and it seemed to me equally certain that a political system, which in the past had brought the Mother-country to such freedom at home and to such generous ideals of governaunce abroad, had failed to meet successfully the new conditions of modern democracy and was breaking down in decay.

CHAPTER II

A "SEASON" IN LONDON

On a Friday evening in the middle of May, 1909, I reached Liverpool and gained an insight at once into one of the secrets of how the Englishman of old learned his self-reliance, his "unbeatableness." It was the luggage system. In America and in Australia there is a "check" method of dealing with luggage. You get a token from the railway company or shipping office, and at the journey's end your hotel, or the Express Delivery Company you employ, takes the token, collects the luggage and all is well. England, however, treats luggage as a school of national character. You must be sturdy, self-reliant, combative, tactful, diplomatic if you wish to carry luggage about in England. (You may, however, call it "luggage" or "baggage" at your discretion: in America you must say "baggage" or a negro porter will snort at you in derision as he says: "Yer mean baggage.")

At Liverpool our luggage was taken off the steamer and mixed in a confused heap. Then it was distributed over different parts of a huge shed. During this distribution some of it was burst open. When the various packages had been well distributed, we were allowed access and could go round and claim our possessions.

After one hour and a quarter of wrestling with luggage each individual passenger, with the help of a heavily-laden and heavily-tipped porter, saw his own aboard the train and we slid through the darkness towards London, at sixty miles an hour, discovering that the British railway is, for smoothness and comfort, far better than the American. At Euston the luggage ordeal was repeated, the English inhabitants treating it with stoical patience that I, impatient at this waste of time and energy, could not but envy. Yes, it is a fine character for "getting there" quietly—the English; and one foundation of it is luggage.

* * * * *

The cabman whom I secured at Euston was a hansom cabman out of Dickens, with a voice full of London fog, and a glowing, hospitable nose. Perhaps he really did not know his way, perhaps he had a spasm of dishonesty. Whatever the reason, in driving me to the Savage Club he took me for an extensive tour of London between Temple Bar and Westminster Bridge. The experience was delightful. It was in the small hours of the morning and, passing along hushed streets, the soul of London was awake while its busy material life was for a brief time stilled. The great, grey old city was peopled mainly with her ghosts. Mostly they were cheerful ghosts, of fine men and women who lived sturdily and died courageously even when a little unseasonably and violently.

Does the Londoner ever summon to a parade his city's ghosts, as I did that early May morning, and note what a gallant array they make? How

many of them, too, are world ghosts: known wherever European civilisation exists and men are concerned with freedom of religion and of thought, with tolerance and with political freedom? The buildings in their black and grey and brilliant white lent themselves to the fancy of a city of dreams. The towers seemed disembodied and afloat in the air.

In time we came to the front of the Houses of Parliament where the cabman stopped to ask for fresh instructions. For some moments I neglected to answer him for here was Westminster, the shrine of the race; here the seed-plot in which was nurtured the tiny plant of our own Australian freedom. Yonder, high in the pale early morning light, was the Nelson monument. It was the very heart of the English world. What a splendidly dishonest cabman!

* * * * *

The Savage Club, to which my Sydney Club was affiliated, took me in for the rest of the dark hours (against the rules I found afterwards; but in London rules seem to count for naught when it is a question of making a stranger, especially a "colonial," comfortable) and I climbed up a quaint, winding staircase to a quaint little room which overlooked the Thames; Cleopatra's Needle one side, Charing Cross railway station the other, across the river a great British Lion standing out in silhouette. A little later, when I found that the lion was the sign of a brewery, I refused to allow it to step down from its niche as a national symbol. Again later, I knew I was right. As a brewery sign it *was* a national symbol.

Looking out on the Thames, a monument of the oldest civilisation on one side, of the newest on the other, the British Lion aggressively perched over both, to sleep would have been a sad waste of time. The centuries were passing in review up that river—the British coracles, the Roman galleys, the ships of the Danes, the Angles and the Normans. I watched for the dawn to come and it came with the herald of the morning in London—an odour mingled of coal smoke and grilled kippers. I became used to it in time, but for many weeks I asked myself why it was allowed to burn soft coal and partially burn kippers within the area of a civilised city.

* * * * *

The "coldness and reserve" of the Englishman's character, his bleak inhospitality to the stranger, were two misconceptions which I had to abandon at once on English soil. It used to be, I think, a somewhat common impression in Australia that within the charmed circle of English hospitality one may be very happy, but that the difficulties of entry are enormous, the preparatory ceremonial rites protracted and burdensome, and that it is almost necessary to begin with one's grandfather. The idea had its source probably in the usual behaviour of the Englishman travelling abroad. Abroad something—it may be shyness—keeps the Englishman aloof, reserved, cautious of making or accepting advances towards acquaintanceship.

You cannot travel with the average American for an hour without knowing his walk in life, the pace he thinks he is making in it, his marital and

family circumstances and some of the cute things he has done. The Australian is much of the same character as a traveller, giving and accepting personal confidences, and eager to explain himself. The Englishman feels none of this need to explain himself. He is (as Emerson remarked) an island and you must have a valid passport before venturing to land on the shores of him.

But in his home the Englishman is more confident and does not surround himself with hedges of formality. I knew personally perhaps a dozen people in England. A few others knew me by name through association with public affairs. I found more than a score of letters begging me "to drop formality" and to come to lunch, or dinner or to a week-end. And the pleasant invitation was followed by a pleasant greeting. On his own hearth the Englishman (the term, of course, in this regard includes, indeed puts first, the Englishwoman) proved gracious and delightful. He is, as host, at once the servant and the friend of his guests but he does not make a fuss and a labour of making you feel "at home."

* * * * *

One of the invitations was to be the guest of All Souls at Oxford that week-end. It came from Mr. Amery (now at the head of the Admiralty) and then a Fellow of All Souls. I went up to Oxford with him and Mr. E. W. Grigg (now Sir Edward Grigg) and saw the Thames valley first in its gay robes of early spring. The journey (it was, I think, on the only really fine day of that spring) was one of many delights. I had never seen real grass before. I do not wish to disparage

Australian grass, which is the foundation for good mutton and beef and for the finest wool in the world; and every resident of Australia is quite familiar with Australian grass. There is a drought story of such a long spell of dry weather prevailing in Australia that when the rain did come and the grass grew, the sheep did not recognise it and refused to graze. But grass can always be seen growing—*pace* the drought stories, which are mostly humorous exaggerations at their source of origin, though often believed literally elsewhere—in most parts of Australia, and I had seen it flourishing two months before. But it is not like English grass; nor, indeed, is any grass in any other part of the world. I have heard many explanations of English lawns and their calm, content green. But they are not explained by any explanation, however fantastic. They are something from the fairy world.

* * * * *

On the journey I saw the gentleman who was then the favourite ogre of the Dominions—Mr. Winston Churchill, who boasted that he had "banged and bolted and barred the door" in the face of the Dominions statesman who had wanted to help Mr. Chamberlain's mission of Imperial unity. Fittingly for an ogre, he was in a den-like end-carriage, and he was munching his tea as I peeped in on him. But I could recognise at once he was no ogre. His face was too chubby and good-humoured, for all that it was marked by power and recklessness. I was to see Mr. Winston Churchill often afterwards (though rarely to speak with) and was always interested in studying him;

often enraged by his speeches; often compelled to admiration by a grandiose egoism and contempt for convention, which he might have learnt direct from Nietzsche. Seeing him at Antwerp (1914) when he was embarked on that wild folly of "saving" a city which had already fallen, and noting that his passion to do something noble and violent deprived him for the time of the most ordinary judgment, I classed him as a horse which gallops blind when excited, or as a torpedo without a gyroscope. He abounds in courage and vigour but does not direct them.

* * * * *

I wonder to how many people who have spent all their lives in a new country there comes the strange good fortune to have their first dinner in England with the Fellows of All Souls? It was for me an occasion of reverent delight. I sat between Mr. Amery and Sir John Simon, two typical young leaders of different schools of English thought. Both talked, it seemed, for the special benefit of the stranger and in an hour I seemed to know a very great deal of English public life. Sir John Simon was very engaging in conversation, a lambent play of humour and fun in all his talk. I think it was owing to Mr. Amery that somehow I contrived not to go wrong on any point of ritual and marched out in the proper manner to dessert. He was a most charming host and made it a business afterwards to introduce me to many aspects of English life. He was so pleasant that it was grateful to find afterwards that he was such a stalwart in public life—one of the few men on their way to the Front Bench

who was, for example, not afraid to pledge himself to National Service.

* * * * *

Of the stories I heard that evening one stands out in memory. When a certain runaway Queen appeared in London with a companion and they had resided a sufficient time in a London hotel to qualify for marriage in a Register Office, the Registrar refused, on their appearance before him, to marry them. He had never married a Queen before and he was not going to start the bad precedent of Queens marrying in Register Offices. The baffled couple went to their solicitors, and eminent counsel's opinion was secured that there was no obstacle to the marriage. Still the Registrar was obdurate. Eminent counsel's opinion notwithstanding, he was not marrying any Queens in his office. Then it was suggested that it was a case for "political influence" and to Mr. John Burns, the Ministerial head of the Registrar's department, the circumstances were explained, and he consented to write a note to the Registrar telling him gently that the law was the law and had to be observed. That was sufficient, and the torch of Hymen was lit for the runaway Queen by the intervention of Mr. John Burns.

* * * * *

The impression formed that night at Oxford of the young men of England was not afterwards effaced—of a race earnest, seriously-intentioned but with an abounding sense of humour. The "dude" I have rarely encountered on his home soil and I have almost come to the conclusion that

that type is raised in England mainly for the export market. Certainly many specimens find their way to the Dominions and give rise to the impression sometimes that the average rich young man of England is an exquisitely-accoutred ass, who, separated from his clothes, would lose claim to notice. I found the average young man of England a very earnest and serious worker who makes real sacrifices of personal comfort to serve the public interest in some direction—sacrifices that certainly would not be made by the average young Colonial in the same circumstances.

At All Souls, dinner with its quaint ceremonial, and the talk afterwards, lasted until midnight, and then my host took me out to see Oxford by moonlight. The first day in England ended in that atmosphere of enchantment.

* * * * *

There are to be found in the Pacific Isles (though they pass away quickly now as the white man arrives with his cares which must be shared by those he meets, though never to the lessening of his own burden) little Edens to which the curse of Adam has not yet come. Man lives a gracious, courteous life, fruits and flowers near to his hand, without toil or danger, by some deep pool of blue sheltered from the ocean's rough.

It was the thought of one of these that came with quaint insistency that evening at All Souls. Incongruous, absurd to all outward seeming, but it came back to argue that it had an essential element of truth. Certainly nothing could be more fantastic than to think of these men in graceful nakedness lolling over a dinner of nuts and

fruits. Yet their circle, for all its utter difference of garb and circumstance, had the serenity, the high tone of courtesy of a circle of unspoiled savages. Bustle and fret were absent. A calm certainty reigned. Talk was easy, amiable, clear, sparkling like the lapping waves from a quiet, deep pool of knowledge. Nobody was instructing nor hectoring. It was as if the Antipodean savage, having passed through all the stages of discontent and quarrelsomeness and envy and cupidity which we call Civilisation, had come full circle round and again saw life serenely.

Several times since that first evening at All Souls I have visited Oxford, generally as a guest; once to lecture to certain dons and undergraduates on Australian social conditions; once as a representative of London in a fencing team to discover that with the *épée* sword Oxford was not supreme. But I have never (happily) got to anything approaching a pert familiarity with that shrine of noble dreams and tranquil aspirations. I own that I feel it difficult to write of Oxford at all, though (perhaps unfortunately) I am able to write with facility of many things. There is something of rebuke towards shallow generalisations and easy judgments in the atmosphere of the place—an atmosphere of the Round Table. Perhaps others have felt the same awe. There is astonishingly little in the poetic literature of England about Oxford, seeing that so many poets have lived and studied there.

Since Oxford is typical of the best of English life, it is fitting that it should be a place of very sweet and dignified gardens. There is a grandeur and an elegant simplicity in Oxford gardens; and

the Oxford trees are surely the finest in all the world. I like to recall that it was in a measure built around trees. Did not William of Waynflete command that Magdalen be built against an oak that fell a hundred years before, aged six hundred years; and Sir Thomas Whiteway learn in a dream to build a college where there was a "triple elm tree"?

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The "Season" of 1909, I think I am right in saying, was exceptionally brilliant. The country was prospering and generally care-free. The war clouds on the horizon were not visible to all. The bitter political strife which was to affect social life later had not come. London, in particular, was light-hearted, and concerned in making a brave show to her visitors at an Imperial Press Conference. Overseas guests found the hospitality of England as generous and thoughtful as it was spontaneous. On the slenderest thread of a past acquaintance kindness after kindness was strung. Those who knew one personally passed an introduction on to others in an amiable conspiracy that a guest should see every side of England. It was my good fortune to encounter the organised kindness of people in many walks of life.

Earl Beauchamp I had met in New South Wales. He had come there as Governor with ideals, and had left with disillusions. He was very keenly interested in art, music and letters, was a sound critic, and if he had cared to devote himself to either sculpture or writing would probably have made a name. It was his idea when he went to New South Wales as Governor to encourage the

artistic and intellectual life of the community. He brought out a rare stock of *bibelots;* introduced early English music at Government House evenings; had artists and writers as his guests and was a kindly friend to them. But he fell foul of the people whom Mr. Justice Higinbotham of Australia once referred to as "the wealthy lower orders." People with much money, who had won to a sort of official right "to go to Government House" were scandalised to meet there poor poets and artists; and they did not understand missals, nor a Horace ode set to old English music, nor indeed anything that could not be put in a balance sheet.

So Lord Beauchamp had rather an unhappy, frustrated time. The reason of it mainly was as I have told, *pace* various malicious but humorous stories that came to London. The "Government House" set in Australia at his time was more crude than it is to-day. Perhaps his courageous initiative had something to do with helping to a better recognition those elements in a nation's life that are not directly associated with tallow and drapery.

This long digression to lead up to the statement that Lord Beauchamp, remembering this Australian acquaintance, took much trouble to make England pleasant for me.

Sir Edmund Barton, first Prime Minister of Australia, had sent a warm letter of introduction on my behalf to Sir Charles Dilke, the first "discoverer" of Greater Britain, and he gave up to me some time in London and at his Thames-side bungalow. Barton and Dilke had come to a close friendship during the former's visit to London for

an Imperial Conference. They were of two very distinct types—Barton, a genial Dr. Johnson in conversation, hating to bring a "brutal bulldog of a fact" into his witty, humorous disquisitions on things in general; Dilke weaving his monologues close and tight with facts. Dilke's memory must have been astonishing for his encyclopædic disquisitions rarely had the smallest inaccuracy, and he always preferred to lecture to you on your own special subjects (Mr. Leo Maxse accused Sir Charles Dilke of "knowing the height of every policeman in Potsdam"; and that was *his* specialty).

In 1909 Sir Charles Dilke was an ageing man, but still *beau sabreur*. He introduced me to the water rats of the Thames; showed me how to get the best out of an oar; beat me handsomely with the *épée;* discussed Australian politics with keen judgment, exact knowledge and a lively aristocratic hatred for the Dick Seddon type of Dominion politician (he should have lived to know Mr. Hughes of Australia!); talked of the Navy with intimate expert knowledge; told me that the only way to get sleep on a long carriage journey was to lean forward, elbows on knees, face on hands; and spoke with an assured knowledge of a thousand and one other things. I think it must have been a certain splendid arrogance which made him a Radical in politics. Under Charles I he would have been an admirable despotic minister. Under a constitutional monarchy he was driven to be a Republican.

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I was not a week in England before I had heard a debate in the Commons and was as proud as a

peacock because for the benefit of my neighbour in the gallery—a Guards officer—I could identify some of the personalities and explain a point of procedure in *his* country's legislature (Australia follows British Parliamentary procedure exactly).

I heard on different occasions, in Parliament or out of it, all the big oratorical guns. I put, then, Lord Rosebery and Mr. Asquith as the two first speakers in England. At his best Mr. Asquith had a Baconian directness with a flavour of humour and eloquence. Lord Rosebery was more eloquent, more sentimental, more literary—for a single speech far the superior, for a series of speeches perhaps not quite so good. Next to them I put Mr. George Wyndham, Lord Curzon and Sir John Simon. Mr. Balfour was ingenious and subtle, but cold and involved. Mr. Bonar Law spoke sensibly, directly, but not very attractively. Lord Milner was a charming speaker among friends; at a public meeting he put his wisdom between boards.

To a knowledge of British politics outside the legislature, I was helped by a score of brilliant men, among them Mr. Richard Jebb, whose great work for Imperial unity is hardly yet appreciated at its true worth; Mr. F. S. Oliver, curious combination of masterful man of business, charming man of letters and political philosopher; Mr. John Buchan, another man of varied genius, and Mr. Spenser Wilkinson, whom I had known and respected from the other side of the world as one who was writing the whole logical truth on defence matters. I met him first at a big Lord Northcliffe luncheon. Lord Northcliffe, who had a quaint sense of fun, told me that I was to sit between

"the two most famous fighting men of the age." I found on my right Mr. Spenser Wilkinson, Professor of Military History at Oxford, and on my left Mr. Eugene Sandow. Sir T. Comyn Platt introduced me to the "Confederates"—a secret Tory political club which was known among the Liberals by the awful title of the "Jack the Rippers." Sir E. T. Cook and Mr. John Burns helped me to know something of the other side in politics.

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After Parliament, the Navy. Lord Northcliffe (rather than that I should miss a naval review arranged for the Imperial Press Conference visitors), insisted that his ticket for a special launch should be transferred to me. I saw for the first time the might of the British Navy in June 1909. The sea that day was dull and leaden, reflecting a dull and leaden sky, as we steamed out past the old *Victory* —memorial of great dangers of the past greatly overcome—to the Solent, lined like a busy street with great, dull, leaden-hued ships. It seemed fitting so, more fitting to the event than a bright heaven and a dancing water; for the Fleet had little suggestion of gaiety as it stretched line upon line out to the horizon where sea and sky met—a vast bulk of brooding power.

How vast to the Australian eye that power! In Australia the British naval might, up till then, had never been represented by anything more impressive than a small group of cruisers and gunboats. In 1908 the United States sent a Fleet of sixteen battleships on a visit to Australian waters. But that Fleet was a small squadron

compared to this Armada of one hundred and again almost half a hundred vessels, ranging from the great fortresses of the *Dreadnought* type to the viperish destroyers, bringing danger with their speed; and the uncanny submarines, stealing under the water, invisible to the ships they threaten except for a little staff, slender as the antenna of an insect, serving as an eye to the brain below.

Lord Fisher, who was then never known as anything else but "Jacky" Fisher, I met soon after, and he was kind enough to give me leave to go and live with the Navy a while and study its actual working. (I think I was the first civilian to be allowed to take a diving-trip in a British submarine.) "Jacky" Fisher had a magnetic personality and was diplomat and politician as well as sailor. But most of all he was evangelist. The English people have a sprinkling of men with evangelical ardour, and though the average Englishman will not preach about himself nor "boost" his country, he likes to live a little in the pulpit, and is prone to join in some kind of evangelical society, if it is only one to send you a circular in August not to leave your cat shut up when you go away on a holiday. All of Fisher's heart was with the Navy, and he neglected nothing at all that could help anyone to a better knowledge of it. Knowing that, owing to his kindness in giving me the facilities for it, I was writing a book on the Navy, he wrote me a letter from the Admiralty, on Trafalgar Day, 1909, sending it round by hand, to say that above all things, not to neglect to give full value to Nelson's influence.

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Like Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, Lord Roberts had had his eyes opened by the South African war. The closing years of the nineteenth century really marked the beginning of the end of the European system which was established by the Napoleonic wars, and the South African war, at the dawn of the twentieth century, was the first move in the plan of the German Empire to establish a world hegemony over the ruins of British power. In all probability that war would never have broken out if it had not been for the ambition of Germany. President Kruger in Pretoria was but the tool of the Kaiser in Potsdam. The war was designed by the German war party to be the first step in the downfall of the British Empire. For direct intervention in the issue (which was to have been the next step) the Germans found at the last moment that they had not the necessary stomach, and their efforts to secure a joint intervention by the European Powers failed. The British Navy—of overwhelming relative strength at that time—stood in the way, and Germany had to wait for her challenge to Great Britain until she felt she could in some measure hold her own at sea.

The Boers went into the war confident that the Germans would come to their help. The Germans not only abandoned them when they saw their cause was hopeless, but treated them with contumely—a characteristic instance of the psychological blundering which gave the Germans in the Great War some of their most sturdy foes in South African Boers who had fought against England in 1900–2.

Lord Roberts coming back from the South African war, and thinking over the position which

the British Empire held in the world—that of the most wealthy Power, but from a point of view of military defence relatively one of the weakest Powers—concluded that the position was too perilous. He was statesman and soldier—a great brain as well as a great heart in that little dapper frame of his; a passionate lover of peace and anxious only for the security of the Kingdom. His "National Service" plan would have ensured for the manhood of the country just enough training to make them useful for the defence of their homes without trying to make of them professional soldiers.

Had it not been for the politicians, their timorousness and their partisan jealousies, it would have been adopted without question and welcomed by the people. (In Australia, where I was one of the first members of a League to advocate Lord Roberts's plan of national defence, we had it in legal force and loyally followed by the people within a few years of its first proposal.) But one section of politicians feared its effect in calming those class antagonisms, exploiting which was their nasty trade; another section was timid and indifferent. "Bobs," who from subaltern to Field-Marshal had shown always a noble courage, a perfect sense of duty and a genius for clear thinking, was met with coldness from some, with contemptuous abuse from others. The gentle patience and serene courage with which he carried on under this ordeal stamped him as the perfect Christian soldier. What a wonderful chum he must have been as a young gunner; what an ideal chief as a senior officer! I met him several times between 1909 and 1914 and always went away

with a new stock of confidence in the race that could produce a type like this: saint, gentleman, warrior. His death on the battle front in 1914, with all his warnings justified, the wisdom of his scorned counsels tragically proved: he still serene, confident, helpful, with never a word of reproach nor of rebuke, trying to help as well as he could those who had contemned him, was a fitting end to a chivalrous life.

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Going about the country speaking for Lord Roberts's National Service League, I had many good opportunities for observing English people of all classes. One of my first meetings was at Middlesbro', where the Chairman was a local celebrity who announced himself a Socialist in politics. He took some trouble to explain at the outset that he took the Chair in his official capacity only, and had no sympathy at all with any military ideas such as universal training for service. He went on to mention that his grandmother had been on board one of Nelson's ships at Trafalgar, and whilst on this point, he forgot entirely that he was a Socialist and showed the average Englishman's pride of the record of his race. I scrapped all that I had prepared to say in the way of argument for National Service and founded my talk on the text of his Trafalgar reminiscences. Afterwards he told me that he had been "converted." I might have told him that there had been no change of heart at all on his part; that he had been all the time a sound Englishman, but had got into his head, without understanding it, some parrot talk, but it had never reached his heart.

A meeting shared at Plymouth with Sir George White, the gallant defender of Ladysmith, gave me a proof that the English were not over-particular about points of formality. I had not been warned that the meeting was a "full dress" occasion. Everybody was in orders and the platform flanked by naval and military pensioners in their scarlet coats when (after a long train journey to get to the meeting) I came on—a distinctly shabby figure. It did not make any difference. It seemed to be understood that I was not wilfully offending against the conventions of the occasion, and I had a most cordial reception and the honour of a leading article in a morning paper the next day.

A little meeting at Kington, near the borders of Wales, was a very delightful experience. When I went on to the platform there, I found that the county people who had organised the meeting had levied on all the conservatories in the neighbourhood to convert the platform into a miniature forest of gum trees. It was their compliment to an Australian visitor. People who can do that sort of thing have in their hearts the instinct of the most gracious hospitality.

In all the many scores of meetings I addressed in the cause of National Service, I can remember only one serious disappointment. I had given up an attractive week-end engagement to go to speak at Letchworth—the Garden City—and the organisers of the meeting had promised that I should have the opportunity of addressing a large number of cranks, for Letchworth was (and I presume still is) a happy home for faddists. The meeting consisted of exactly three persons. Somebody else was lecturing in the town that night

on a Nut Diet and that had proved to be an irresistible counter-attraction. When the Englishman takes to a fad he takes to it with real evangelical earnestness.

Meetings of a more political character, such as a series I undertook in South London to speak on Imperial policy, brought me to a knowledge of the fact that one method of political argument in England was to organise a body of men to howl a speaker down or to sing songs at him. Now heckling, even when vigorous and angry, is not at all a bad thing for a public meeting, but I fail to see that organised disorder can help a people to arrive at the truth of any issue. I do not speak from any personal exasperation on the point, for it happens that on all occasions, sometimes after much disorder, I have got a hearing eventually (if you can somehow put it into the minds of a mass of English people that you have something sincere to say, they will in time hear you). The organised claques of applauders which are a feature of other public meetings are almost as objectionable as the disturbing songsters.

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But it was not always the serious side of English life I was being introduced to. I enjoyed all the English sports in due season, and Sir Herbert Tree took me under his glossy and well-preened wing to guide me to a knowledge of the theatre. Private hospitality was so gracious that I was always remembering the story of one of the English Crusaders. He was entertained at dinner by the Grand Turk, and invited him to dinner in return. That was counted rather presumptuous, and the

Grand Turk arranged that nowhere in the city should the Christian be able to get firewood. It was in the depth of winter. The English knight ruined his fortunes, but saved the name of his race for hospitality by buying up all the walnuts of the place and using them for fuel. There does not seem to have been since any very great departure from that tradition.

I was disappointed in the demands made by the English climate on endurance. I had expected a climate which called for heroism. I found one pleasant on the average in comparison with most places that I know well except Sydney. Certainly the scarcity of sunshine was a deprivation, but even the London fogs which creep up from the sea along the Thames Valley are really not very dreadful. My first fog indeed was almost a pleasure. Its herald was a blue-grey mistiness in the air, which gave a new beauty to the vistas of the parks, the bare trees getting for their elaborate etchings a fine effect with the grey background. The mistiness deepened with the hours. Then the heavy vapour rolled in from the North Sea, and London was wrapped in a mist which set the domes afloat, and made the spires separate from the bodies of the churches, so that they stood as pointing fingers in the sky. The fog softened every outline, hid every sordidness. When on this mantle of mist a million chimneys began to work with their dark pencils, and the fog thickened and blackened, it was a little dismal. But then there was another change. A faint yellow luminous light pervaded the air as though the particles of carbon in the fog were being slowly burned. No sun was visible, but a faint unearthly yellow light glowed from

everywhere. In it, whites lost their sharpness, reds were intensified, browns took a new richness, greens faded to a whitish-grey. London showed as full of new colour. Then the Great Artist swept the whole picture off the canvas with a brush of wind and it was clear again. I do not yet know what London fogs are to the really jaded palate. To a new taste they are actually interesting.

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In time I came to be a lover of London, as I suppose happens to most men who have lived there for a long time and have a sense of the seemly and beautiful. The crowning joy of a holiday nowadays is the coming back to London. That joy is mingled of a sense of quiet exultation (which the old Roman must have felt when he came back from Tarentum and saw again the Forum), the sense of coming back as a citizen to the greatest city of the world; of a sense of domestic content, as one feels returning from some grand spectacle to a happy, gracious home; of a sense, too, that there are dear, enduring charms in London which no other place of the world has, her parks, trees, lawns, flowers, abounding in soft beauty, the beauty one can live with and find that with each year its appeal is stronger, and with every return more manifest.

Always I try to contrive that the end of a holiday spell should leave one day free to loiter over London with nothing to do but to get in touch again with its good-humoured vastness, its sweet humaneness. There is no city in the world which has at once so much orderliness and liberty and honesty and efficiency. A glimpse of a sleek,

well-fed cat, sleeping tranquilly on the door-step of a house in a busy street tells me again that I am in London, where humaneness to animals is so much the common habit of the people that cats have no fear of passers-by, and the park wood-pigeons will strut about in fat security under your very feet.

London is in character unchangeable. Her nature persists. This or that innovation becomes absorbed. But there is always for her citizen returning some little thing to watch out for, and to notice—like a new ribbon in a beloved's hair. Not every year can one hope for such a surprise as that of a decade ago when, coming back, there could be noted a new coat of gold on the pine-apples which a sly thought of the architect designed as proper ornaments for the pinnacles of St. Paul's —so placed as to look directly down on generations of Lord Mayors' banquets. But I noticed coming back last summer that St. Clement Danes had put vastly pretty blue and gold faces to its clock, and they harmonised well with its soft white stone. The streets were more than usually "up," and there was more than usual need for the wonderful good-humour and skill of London's traffic drivers; also London was just a little excited because for the first time since Julius Cæsar landed, it was possible to have grouse for luncheon on *the* 12th. The aeroplane made that possible. London, in her dear, funny old way had diverted the new marvel of science to the service of her affectation of gluttony—affectation, for I cannot think of a grouse fresh from the gun as a delicacy.

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The home life of the well-to-do in England struck me as delightful. In England, more than anywhere else in the world, the home is well managed. Among the upper classes it runs like a machine of perpetual motion. There is no sign of the driving power, no racket, no effort. Breakfast is a meal of charming informality; but dinner a ceremony of ritual, the social crown of the day, and you are expected to treat it with the considerateness due to its importance. To be asked to dinner is the sign of the Englishman's acceptance of you as a desirable person. (He may ask you to lunch without admitting quite as much.) To be asked, casually, "to eat with us" at dinner time shows an actual friendliness which is willing to allow some familiarity.

The middle class fashions itself as closely as it can on the upper class. Its home is as admirably managed, though on a smaller scale. Its observance of etiquette is more rigid. For really strict observance of class distinctions, however, it is necessary to go to the servants' hall.

It is because the luxury of upper-class life in England is suave and refined that it seems right. It does not challenge antagonism as the more arrogant wealth of other lands. But the very suavity and good taste of English luxury may make it too dangerously attractive. If you allow yourself to become too luxurious you soften your fibre. I do not urge any relapse into savagery; nor any deliberate and unnecessary sacrifice of comfort; but suggest that some of the vigour of life and of the freedom of life may be lost by a habit of luxury, especially in food.

"Instance me any other pleasure which gives

you four hours of enjoyment every day of your life," a famous glutton said, defending his constant devotion to the table. He did not know the proud pleasure of the scanty meal won out of peril and difficulty; nor the voluptuousness of occasional luxury to the man whose ordinary custom is Spartan. A pleasure which becomes a habit ceases to be a pleasure in any keen sense of the word. Those who make a custom of elaborate meals lose the best pleasure of the *gourmet* at the same time as they interfere with their fitness and their usefulness.

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But I gossip too much. These discursive notes will indicate, however, that I had, through the kindness of the English people, a good opportunity of studying them. Now to business.

CHAPTER III

ENGLAND AT WORK

THE war for a time changed the industrial face of England. The "unemployed" class vanished almost completely. Agriculture became a thriving industry. The public services fell off in efficiency because so many of their good men were drawn away to the Navy and the Army, and those who came in were usually inferior in character and ability. Bureaucratic Socialism necessarily replaced individualism in the control of most of the nation's work. After the war there was an attempt to perpetuate this bureaucratic system in trade and industry—an attempt which, in my opinion, was unwise and against the grain of the national character. At the time of writing it seems to have been abandoned. The question now is how England will settle down industrially. Will she get back to her old degree or an improved degree of efficiency? Will she continue to follow an individualistic system?

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First, how did the English Industrial system impress an Australian observer in 1909?

I confess that in this, as in other matters, I came with a first feeling of prejudice. There was an opinion in the Dominions at the beginning of this century that the English manufacturer was going

downhill: that because he was too faithful to old-fashioned methods, he was failing to hold his own in world markets. His supremacy in many lines of quality craftmanship was admitted, but he was accused of lack of adaptability.

A particular instance to illustrate this. Seeking to find a reason why an Australian contract for a small arms factory had gone to an American and not an English firm, in spite of the Australian preference to British contracts, I learned that the American tender was in every way so much more economical, expeditious and promising of efficiency, that the Australian Government was obliged in the interests of the nation to forgo the sentiment of Empire trade: that this step was only taken after the most careful consideration and after inquiry had proved that, even ignoring all difference in price, there was grave doubt as to whether the most favoured British tender would make certain Australia's possession of an efficient modern small arms factory. On this point I was told that one great British small arms factory was a curious patchwork affair, still preserving the out-of-date machinery of a quarter of a century ago, but adapting it, or striving to adapt it, year by year, to modern requirements; and that this factory, entrusted with the work of founding a new factory in another part of the British Dominions actually made a Chinese copy of its own original! The new works reproduced all the patches and all the expedients designed to make old machinery do the work of new; and as a result that new factory was not at all a success.

I found that general conclusions drawn from that and other like incidents were too sweeping,

and that there was really very little that was ill with most branches of British industry, except a tendency to hesitate in adapting machinery to new conditions : and that was not general.

The condition of the agricultural industry, however, struck me as deplorable. The Englishman at work as a farmer I thought old-fashioned and inefficient. His machinery was poor, his market organisation poor, the transport system of which he was the victim, suggestive of the fatalistic acceptance of an organised brigandage. Agriculture as an industry seemed to be only surviving owing to the dogged love of the land in English hearts. Farming land was not looked upon as a commercial investment. But the old land-holders loved their estates : the newly rich, if they were of the English spirit, aspired to become land-holders. Both were usually content if from their agricultural estates they were able to make the products or the rents meet working expenses. Agricultural land-holding was a hobby not a business, and being a hobby it might as well be carried on under the old-fashioned conditions of a century ago.

Thus English industrial organisation seemed to have a serious weakness at its base whilst the land was so little productive of food for the population. Other countries have won great manufacturing interests without sacrificing to so dangerous an extent as has England the profitable cultivation of the land.

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In England the whole tendency of public policy since the Free Trade era has been to discourage

the landed industry. I should divide the land history of England into two periods: (1) the Feudal era, during which the land was the greatest source of wealth; during which its products were protected by the most drastic customs laws from foreign competition, and during which it quite fairly bore the greatest part of the national taxation; (2) the Industrial era, during which the land was rapidly supplanted by the factory as a money-spinner; its best workers were drained away by the attractions of the cities; its products lost all their protection and had to compete with foreign goods on terms of disadvantage, but its burdens—of tithes, poor rates, local government rates, succession duties, etc.—were left with most of their old weight. Everything that could help it through the crisis of the new era—technical education, market organisation, cheap credit, cheap transport—was neglected; and, most mischievous of all, the idea was allowed to grow up of the agricultural estate not as a legitimate source of wealth but as a luxury apanage to a great house.

Many landlords were rather proud of the fact that their estates "did not pay." One showed me his books proving that if the capital of his estate were invested in Consols, instead of being kept in the land, he would make about £15,000 a year more profit. He thought it admirable proof that he was a gentle landlord. I thought it shocking proof that his land was not being used to its proper national profit.

Withal the "land question" was so mixed up with party politics that it was quite impossible to get it considered quietly in the light of an economic question. The sort of way in which it *was* regarded

may best be illustrated by this quotation of a song which I heard chanted, with all due solemnity, at a public meeting on the land question held by a prominent Minister of the Crown in an English Midland town in 1910:

When wilt Thou save the people?
O God of Mercy! when?
The people, Lord, the people,
Not thrones and crowns, but men!
God save the people; Thine they are,
Thy children, as Thy angels fair;
Save them from bondage and despair!
God save the people!

When the landlords tried to trample on the poor,
When the hungry man was cursed
For the crust he humbly craved,
As he staggered to the open workhouse door.

Let who will against our liberties conspire,
Strong are arms and hearts and we shall never tire;
We will overwhelm them all with vengeance dire
As we go marching on.

Too long has grim Monopoly
Opposed our sacred cause;
Too long, too long we've borne the yoke
Of its enslaving laws.
Confiding in our champions,
We'll lay the menace low,
Nor stay our hands till we've dispersed
The craven Tory foe!

What sorry fustian as a guide to discussion of a most complicated and a most important national problem!

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The derelict condition of English agriculture seemed to me to have come about in this way. When the age of coal and steam and of power

machinery arrived, with its demand for a great mining and factory population, it happened that England was called upon to meet that demand first. Her coal measures were in part responsible; in part her national genius for organisation; in part her supremacy in sea-power, which had kept away from her territory the wars which had ravaged other great nations of the world and deeply disturbed their industrial development. For a while the British Isles had almost a monopoly of the task of supplying the world's needs of machinery, railways, and other paraphernalia of the new civilisation. A very great material prosperity came from this, but also a very great unsettlement of equilibrium. In other countries where the growth of what may be called the new industrial life was very much more slow, the unsettlement was very much less.

It is well to keep in mind that, if there had not been a Free Trade system adopted in England shortly after the growth of the new industrialism, there would still have been a grave agricultural crisis, because of the withdrawal of labour and capital from the fields for the factories and the mines. England's landowners had to face, on a very much larger scale, the same difficulty as Australian landowners when the gold discoveries were announced—a transfer of agricultural labour to more profitable spheres. (It is interesting to note that the authorities in Australia attempted for some time to suppress the news of gold discoveries, for the reason "that the reports would take away the settlers and their labourers from the farms.")

The withdrawal of labour and capital from agriculture in England, and the quick growth of an

industrial population demanding to be fed from the products of the land, but not helping to produce from the land, were largely responsible for the dear food conditions which led up to the abolition of the Corn Laws and the adoption of a Free Trade system. The remedy for dear local food was sought in the throwing down of all barriers against imports of food from foreign sources. That was a hard blow; but it is necessary to keep in mind that it was the second blow, not the first, to the economic position of the English landowner. He had to face first the competition of the mine and the factory for his labour supply, and then the competition of the foreigner's products for his customers.

Yet a third blow. Shortly after the British people, alone among the peoples of the world, decided that agriculture had to be left to swim or sink under Free Trade conditions, the great empty spaces of the New World began to come under the plough. They were cultivated roughly, cheaply, and the virgin soil responded with good crops. The result was a flood of cheap agricultural products, which threatened for a time the economic stability of every landed industry in the Old World. The wheat—to take one typical instance—from the new lands, grown without fertilisers, with but the lightest cultivation, on lands subjected to no burdens of supporting great armaments and hordes of industrial paupers—this wheat, transported across the oceans by the new cheap means of communication which steam machinery had made possible, could reach the industrial centres of Europe at a price far lower than any possible cost of European production. It could reach; and, in

the case of Great Britain, it did reach. In practically all other countries it found tariff barriers. Those other nations considered that the production by a people of that people's food staples without danger of interference by other people was too important a matter to be allowed to be governed solely by the formulæ of an economic theory. Great Britain was practically the only country which adopted Free Trade in agricultural products ; and the cheap products of the New World thus concentrated on her markets.

The British landowner had, then, to face first a keen competition for his native labour supply, then an open market for his products, and then an era of low prices for agricultural products—an era which can never recur in all probability, since it was due to the first exploitation of virgin soils, a condition which cannot be repeated. Under all those blows the land industry in England was prostrated.

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Now that position called for statesmanship, not silly songs. But the remedy tried (from 1909 to 1914) was, in effect, governed by the spirit of those silly songs.

I came to England just in time to be a witness of the " land campaign " to put everything right—with a " People's Budget " which was to impose new taxes on land, already more heavily taxed than that of any other competing country, and thus secure " the land for the people." The Land was to be for " the People," and everybody was to be happy. The trouble was not so much that " the People " could not have the land, but that

the land, agriculturally speaking, was so little worth having.

It is an eternal illusion of human society, the faith that, by some spell of words or abracadabra of legislation, the land and the people are to be united in holy marriage and live happily ever afterwards. One may note its cry in the records of all past civilisations. And as young communities, springing from European stocks, invade new continents, the cry of "the Land for the People" rises clamant—yea, though there be a square mile and more of land for every man there.

At the time of the "People's Budget" campaign, I recalled the history of another precisely similar "stunt" in Australia as far back as 1861, when it was held that the pastoralists were holding up the land from the people. There was fine politics in a raging, tearing denunciation of the pastoralist as a tyrant, a despoiler of the widow and orphan, an oppressor of the poor, a monopolist of the land, a villain without rights and outside the law. The pastoralists were few in number. They were as a class the most capable and courageous of the community (it needed both courage and capacity to carve a sheep run or a cattle run out of the wilderness), and, therefore, they were not the most popular. It is the option which faces us all, I suspect, in old as well as new communities, to be good-tempered, easygoing and popular, or to do things and arouse antagonism. In a whirlwind of popular passion, "Land for the People" legislation was passed, then, in Australia, though at the time there were about two square miles of land available to every one of the "People." The result was a staggering blow at

the prosperity of the community which culminated ultimately in the great banking crisis.

Well, in England the "Land Campaign" proposals were given legislative effect; and English agriculture continued as before.

The Great War, however, making imported food supplies dear and scanty, did give a promise of better things for the landed interest. Not only was it found profitable to increase the production of the land, but it was urged as a patriotic duty to do so. Before, as I have said, the sole duty of the great landowner was supposed to be to charge low rents. Then, after the Armistice, agriculture slipped back to its pre-war state of a hopelessly muddled industry. Its condition to-day is the greatest reproach that exists to the English reputation for practical organisation.

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It was cheerful in 1909 to turn from agriculture, England's worst industrial muddle, to her public services. They came near to perfection; the police courteous, fair, well-informed, doing in their daily rounds a great deal of judicial and diplomatic work; the Bench, from police court to Privy Council, impartial, humane, incorruptible; the Civil Services diligent, dutiful, capable. At no point did I find a weakness. What struck me was not only the absence of fussiness and the respect for individual liberty, but the generous tolerance of eccentricity. England's public servants proclaimed her a free country, in which the dignity of service was understood, and the petty-mindedness of unnecessary interference was avoided.

I had early means of comparison of public services in the United States and in England. In New York a letter addressed to me at a newspaper office went astray through a clerk refusing to take it in. I inquired for it at the New York Central Post Office; was, very uncivilly, referred to the particular district Post Office which had attempted to deliver the letter. A clerk there could not see that anything could be done. "The letter would be opened, probably, and returned to the writer. . . . Perhaps if I applied at the Washington Dead Letter Office it would do some good." I applied by letter (unanswered); then personally; and was told in a tired way that the matter would be looked into and I should be communicated with in London. That is the last I ever heard of it.

In London one morning I left a small despatch case in an omnibus. Reporting to Scotland Yard, I stated that the papers in the portfolio were important and their recovery urgent. The police officer at once volunteered to telephone round to every police station in the metropolitan district, reporting the loss and asking that word should be at once sent if the article were handed in. Before eleven that night a police officer called at the house where I was staying with a message from Scotland Yard that the case had been found.

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Considering the English worker as manufacturer, the impression we have always had in Australia is that anything of British manufacture is good, solid, lasting. "America for smart, gimcrackery things, England for solid work," I heard an Australian railwayman once say, referring to

locomotives. Observation on the spot confirmed that view. The British workman in engineering shop or factory is conscientious and thorough. But his methods of manufacture are in a few cases a little tainted with old fashion.

It is not a fact that British workmanship is generally out of date and inferior. English work is still, on the whole, the soundest and best in the world. Slow to change a method, very thorough in getting the best possible results out of that method—that is the British craftsman. In a time of reckless pursuit of cheapness at the price of a shoddy result, his stand for sound, solid work has been valuable. It has probably kept the world's standard at a generally higher level.

But, without a doubt, conservatism has been allowed to become in some directions detrimental to success. We are not living in the ideal age of which Ruskin and William Morris dreamed beautiful dreams. A country cannot always afford to keep the highest ideals of manufacture, must often face shoddy with shoddy or "shut up shop." If the national aim were diverted in England from the present economic ideals and a different ambition sought—that of a self-contained, self-supporting, mutually dependent Empire, largely indifferent to the foreigner either as a supplier or a consumer—a higher standard could be preserved. Among ourselves we could practise faithful manufacture and true craftsmanship, leaving the outsiders to produce and consume their own goods in their own way. But with a Free Trade system there is a certain worship of ancientry in some English manufacturers that must be modified.

I venture this opinion with some feeling of

regret; for there is something very lovable in the spirit which looks upon an old machine rather in the light of an old servant, not to be dispensed with until the last possible moment. I do like to see the English artisan fondling and patting his machine, endowing it with something of life, taking as much care of its toilet as if it were his child. That is the spirit in which we may one day take the sordidness and the ugliness out of this epoch of machinery and get nearer to the poetry in its life. But, alas, *les affaires sont les affaires.* Under conditions of free competition, the master who keeps his old servants at their work when their efficiency has gone, in time loses his estate. The factory which keeps its old machines at their work when their efficiency has gone, in time loses its business. The old servant must be pensioned, the old machine retired (a gentler word than the American "scrapped").

Of course not all British manufacturers are tainted with old fashion. Many of them still lead the world; are able, from sheer skill of organisation and craftsmanship, to draw raw materials from the other end of the earth, to manufacture them in England and then to send the finished product to every market. The best example is the textile industry of the West Riding of Yorkshire. The most truly Imperial of our industries it is; both in the production of its raw material and in its manufacturing processes almost completely British. Its existence forces the conclusion that the English people possess some special gifts of manufacture, of organisation and of administration. There is no reason, except on the presumption of those special gifts, why we

should be able to bring wool from Australia and New Zealand, South Africa and elsewhere, manufacture from it here cloth which is sent to consumers in all parts of the world, and which because of its high quality passes the high tariff barriers raised against its entry.

This wool textile industry shows the English race at its best, perfecting the growth of wool in the Antipodes and perfecting the development of machinery in Yorkshire so that the finest results are got from this material.

The "oldest staple" industry of England—wool manufacture has many links with the history of the British race. The British spirit of tolerance gave it its first impetus when Plantagenets and, later, Tudors encouraged Flemish weavers to take refuge in our island from tyranny on the continent. Later, "farmer" King George III made wool his special interest, and secured from Spain a few of the famous merino sheep of that country. I think that originally the British sheep was superior to the Spanish sheep, but, as agriculture progressed in England and the sheep came to be a semi-domesticated animal, the quality of English wool deteriorated in fineness as compared with the wool of the Spanish merino sheep, which had been kept to a nomadic life. An infusion of merino blood into English breeds was designed by George III to get finer English wool. He entrusted the working of his sheep stud farm to Sir Joseph Banks, then President of the Royal Society.

Now about this time there was born at Marton, Yorkshire, James Cook, who was destined to win for the British Empire Australia; and wide pastures

of that country, not the English fields, were to build up the merino flocks of which George III dreamed.

Captain Cook's expedition had had for its chief purpose, to allow astronomers to observe from the South Seas a transit of Venus. But it had some subsidiary scientific interests, and with the expedition was an enthusiastic botanist, the Sir Joseph Banks just mentioned. Having completed its astronomical work, Captain Cook's expedition went exploring around the South Seas, and in time touched upon the east coast of a new continent. Landing on the shores of a wide, shallow bay, Joseph Banks saw a treasure of flowers hitherto unknown to his science. These were the kinds that flourished in Europe in the Neolithic age and had long since become extinct in the old world. The place was named at his instance Botany Bay, though Captain Cook had first thought to call it Stingray Bay.

Returning to England, Captain Cook had not much good to say for the new continent—which was named at first "New Holland." It was quite unsuitable, he thought, for British settlement. But Joseph Banks working, without being aware of it, for the merino stud entrusted to him, pleaded Australia's cause. A country which had such wonderful flowers *must*, he thought, be a good country. The proposal to settle there the loyal colonists of the American States who had adhered to the Mother Country in the war of American Independence, was vetoed in spite of his advocacy. But finally, on Banks's insistence, it was agreed to found a settlement at Botany Bay. Thus the great Dominion of Australia had its humble beginning.

Now the chain was complete. A wise king seeking to be truly a shepherd to his people; a gallant mariner discovering the sheep-run of the world and making it British; and a persevering scientist refusing to allow the discovery to be ignored. It was not in the Mother-country's fields that the perfect wool-sheep of which George III dreamed was to be evolved, but in fields far away, yet still to-day within the dominions of his descendant, George V.

The cotton textile industry is almost as wonderful, though for that the British race has not yet succeeded in growing its own raw material. But when the raw material has reached Lancashire it is made into almost everything in the way of fabrics.

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Before the Great War a conspicuous lack of English industry was in capacity for "mass production." It was too intently engaged in fine work to bother about the turning out in vast quantities and at cheap rates of such articles as watches, typewriters, sewing-machines, and low-priced motors. The United States was supreme in that class of production. There were in England in 1914 hardly any gauges for this kind of work, and that was our great initial difficulty in organising the supply of shells in sufficient quantity. An economic reorganisation carried on under the full stress of that desperate struggle quickly remedied that, and by 1916–17 British manufacture was equal to all the huge demands made by the war.

The story of how British workshops and workmen took up the task of arming, equipping and clothing not only the British armies, but those of

the Allies, during the Great War, I cannot attempt to tell. But I must mention it if only to say that it was the greatest industrial achievement in all history and proof that the English people can do anything when they try.

Of the period after the Armistice the story is not so cheerful. England on the signing of the Armistice was in a position of golden opportunity. Her industries had been forced by war necessities to develop to a stage which they had never reached before, which, indeed, surpassed the degree of equipment which any country's factories had ever reached. For the first time they were equipped for great mass production as well as for fine production. The country was stuffed with machinery and with raw material. The great German industries and markets had fallen into our hands.

Apparently there was nothing wanting to give us five " boom " years in trade if the manufacturing and trading genius of the British people had been given fair scope, with just the minimum of Government overseeing and help to prevent real hardships coming to any section of the people during the transition period. A war-shattered world had to refit from top to bottom. Machinery of all kinds, clothing, furnishings—everything was short. America made a bold bid for the business. Very promptly a big section of her war machine was switched over to the purposes of peace and became a great organisation for " commercial travelling." In the British " Intelligence " reports following the Armistice there are many records of the vigorous American commercial offensive in France and in Belgium, working on the line, " Come along,

now, and give your orders to the people who won the war for you."

Good type Americans neither believed nor proclaimed that "America won the war." But few of them would object to founding a big trade campaign in Europe on America's war achievements. For the American as a commercial traveller works with a fury of zeal not only for the profit of the business but for the fun of the business. He likes to win an order just as he likes his side to win a baseball match, even if there is no money in the game.

And he puts all kinds of skill and "notions" into his work. I remember meeting abroad an American commercial traveller who was working the Far East in a machine line—a sausage-making machine or a sewing-machine, it is immaterial to specify which, but it was one of them. He was very well informed indeed about the countries he was going to "work," and told me of a "notion" he had to make his machine a national institution in Tibet. He knew that the Tibetans use praying machines—they write a prayer on a strip of parchment and then put it on a wheel and work the wheel. Heaven is content. My cute American friend was prepared to fix up his machine with a prayer attachment, so that the pious Tibetan could be making sausage-meat or sewing garments, and at the same time praying at the rate of thousands of prayers per hour.

It seems a made-up yarn. But it is not. It is of the same school of adaptable salesmanship which inspired Standard Oil of America to flood China with tin kerosene lamps at a loss, reckoning that these lamps were going to

burn millions of gallons of Standard oil at a profit.

But withal America had to take second place to England in the competition for refitting orders after the Armistice. The quality of English goods told, and the stability of English contracts, and England's control of raw materials. Also the English manufacturers showed more foresight and courage than their competitors.

Thus a very pleasant prospect opened out of making good some of our war losses. Alas! it was quickly spoiled. A foolish Government pushing taxation beyond the limits of endurance; foolish Labour leaders, listening to promptings from foreign revolutionaries and deliberately working on a policy of "stopping the wheels from going round," were responsible. So the "boom" of 1918–1919 had a short life, and the black depression of 1920–1921–1922 followed.

Will England emerge from that and again take her old place in the world's trade? I think yes, though it will be necessary to move five millions of the present superfluous populations to lands of lots of room under the flag. There will never be, in my opinion, grave revolutionary Labour troubles.

The British working man is not Socialist, Communist nor Bolshevist in spirit. He deserves every word of the praise conferred on him by a recent European Revolutionary Congress that his "Conservatism" (i.e. good sense) is "the one great obstacle to a world revolution." He is good-hearted, not envious by nature, and wishes to have a "sporting chance" in life. True, he has not the best of leadership, but it is the quality of

the English to do very well sometimes with very poor leadership.

The Labour movement in its leadership suffers from the very freedom and fluidity of our social system, which generally prevents the best working men from becoming "Labour leaders." The English manual workers produce year by year very many men of energy, of character and of brain power (probably in ratio of population their full share of these). But the working man of energy, character and brains does not remain long a working man. There is a free road open to him and a very keen demand upon the limited supply of men of real ability. He becomes employer, administrator, organiser. Rarely does he become a Labour leader. (There are, of course, some exceptions.) Having himself succeeded, and found the path to success a fairly easy one, he is inclined to be, if anything, less sympathetic to Labour "agitators" than are people of inherited wealth and position.

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Does the British working man—restricting the term to the artisan and labourer—want State Socialism? Would he welcome its prospect if he understood clearly what it entailed? Would he be happy if he got it? I should say, without hesitation, "No." Strongly embedded in his character is a love for a "sporting chance" in life. A social system which gave him the certainty of a fair degree of comfort, but without the prospect of a "rise in life," would not appeal to him. He prefers the ups and downs with their zest of adventure. At the back of his mind there is a

tinge of contempt for State employees who, he thinks, play for safety, and for the sake of safety give up some of their independence.

A manufacturer and colliery proprietor tells me that on the subject of the nationalisation of the mines he heard applauded one miner's remark: "We don't want to be postmen." I do not suppose any real derogation of the honourable work of postal employees was meant; but the remark put directly what I have very often heard hinted at. The prospects of a working-class family being discussed, I have heard it said: "Jim is a bit weakly-like; they'll want to get him into a Government job." The general tone of the working man's discussion of State employees —and to a lesser extent of municipal employees— is curiously compounded of envy and pity. It is thought that they have an easier time, but it is also thought that they are rather "poorer sorts" than the average.

It is human nature showing in the industrial relationship. More than one of the ancient myths tells of a mortal being offered the chance to escape from the onerous adventure of life to the calm of Olympus and choosing the way of struggle. Given any hope at all, and the Englishman does not want a "safe" life; he wants the joy of effort, of achievement. He does not play games in which there is no chance of losing. A game of life with every move quite clearly known from beginning to end does not attract him.

True, the monotony of certain industrial employments influences some workers' minds to accept the Socialist promises of betterment. But even in the case of workers to whom our present

system offers very little of the adventure of life, a recognition of the fact that State Socialism would take away even that adventure would turn them from that path. The ideal of liberty kills the attraction not only of theocratic Socialism, and of despotic Socialism, but also of bureaucratic Socialism.

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There is really, I think, a much more plausible appeal to human nature in "Bolshevism"—i.e. destructive Nihilism—than in Socialism. In almost every human being there is some of the instinct of "Bolshevism." In infancy there is a good deal of it. The infant, as yet unable to speak or to think, who wants to eat the bath soap, and, because it is not allowed to eat that soap, kicks and screams and beats its little head against the bath, is, for the time being, a "Bolshevik." It is "fed up" because it cannot get its own way, and is willing to hurt itself in its anger and disappointment. The man who, in a rage because things are not to his liking, kicks his hat about or upsets the breakfast table, is not altogether unknown. He is, for the time being, a "Bolshevik." We have to recognise that there is that Old Adam in most of us. Human nature under the strain of a great irritation is apt to forget reason, sense, everything, and merely want to do something destructive.

"Bolshevism" is, in fact, that senseless wild irritation, that desire for destruction, which so many of us feel momentarily, become *chronic*. It has a strong root in human nature, and is for that reason more dangerous than Socialism, for

the instincts of human nature are usually against the interferences, the organised slaveries of Socialism; but the plant of Bolshevism to flourish must have a soil of envy or of despair. The soil of envy is not provided by the English character. It is the duty of our rulers to see that the soil of despair is not provided.

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There would be, I think, a great future in British politics for a leader who preached a robust and *sympathetic* individualism. The "Manchester School" expressed well the English sentiment in its passion for liberty, but went astray in being anti-national and in being callous to the interests of the weak. If I diagnose the British worker's mind correctly, he wants full liberty to live his own life; he is content that there should be a struggle for existence and a sporting risk in life. But he does not see life as merely a soulless effort for material wealth. He is not content to drop patriotism out of his scheme of things, nor to condemn the weak to be trampled under. He wants freedom and pride of nationality and some sympathy for the under-dog.

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During these past thirteen years in England I have got to know the English working man fairly well. Twice before the war I went tramping and living his life to win a way to his confidence; and during the four years of the war he was my mate in the field. I insist that he is the best fellow in the world, and that, given decent leadership, he can and will do anything to keep his country at the head of the world.

From a notebook of one "tramp" I made as a worker this—which is not a composite but an individual portrait—is, I think, typical.

I met "William Smith" in a street of Birmingham by asking him the way to the Town Hall. He added to his directions the statement that it was a fine building, and that the city's picture gallery was near. That was promising, and I enticed him to talk, and after a glass of beer—with what I could not help thinking was a delicate consideration for my purse, he called for a very small drink (cost then threehalfpence)—he was quite confidential to "the workman from Australia."

William Smith, aged seventy-five, upright and sturdy of figure, clear of eye, the grey of his abundant hair and beard suggesting the autumn rather than the winter of life, was born in Huntingdonshire, son of a farm worker. Of course there were not schools for everybody then, and his first education was strictly technical. He became a boy-worker on the farm, getting one shilling a week and his keep. Work was from four in the morning until eight at night, with no holidays, for the pigs and the cows had always to be fed and tended, and they kept no Sabbath.

But this man, whose deep content in life, whose serious joy in its duties as well as its pleasures made his grey figure at seventy-five seem radiant and heroic, was not of the vegetable type, which "puts up with anything." He was not satisfied with his shilling a week and food on a Huntingdonshire farm, and went from there to the coal-pits, where wages were good. This was just after the Crimean War. As a young man earning good

money on the coal, he met his sweetheart. She was timid about his work below ground.

"I was as safe down as up, I told her," he yarned on to me; "but a sweetheart has her way, and I gave it up and came to ———, looking for work." He had a relative employed there by the Council, and was "put on" as a mender of roads. That was forty-five years before, and since then he had worked in the same employment, his first recreation being to learn to read and write at a "morning school." (He said morning school very clearly. I do not know whether he meant evening school.) When I met him he had been turned off with a pension. That he was not allowed to continue to work was a sorrow but not a grievance to him. "I thank you kindly, gentlemen," he had told the council who employed him. "Under God you have given me a good run before you cut me off, and I am grateful to you; and the pension will keep me and the wife, not that I won't be sorry that I can't work for yer, me being hale and hearty still."

His speech on this great occasion of his life he reproduced for me with, doubtless, the same gestures as he had used "before the gentlemen." Their words he did not attempt to quote, but reported indirectly. "They told me I was not to think that they had cut me off my run, but after a long run I was to have a rest. And it is fair enough, I suppose, because they have allowed me to go five years past the age limit. Not that I couldn't do the work still, it being so light, not as if it were heavy work."

To William Smith and his wife had been born fifteen children, of whom six lived. All six were

doing well. One son had secured a post in the same employ as his father had been. One daughter had married a young tradesman from America, and was well-to-do, and sent him a present every year. "It's in dollars, their money," he added with a quaint note of apology that there should be any money not English.

I heard the story of the girl's courting, it being told to me apparently because "you being just another such chap, and I met him in about the same way." The young American had visited the city in connection with some electrical work, had encountered the hearty William Smith in the street, and a talk had led him to coming home to tea. He had suggested bringing some whisky as a contribution to the evening's chat. But William Smith had explained sturdily that "whilst he was not against a glass of beer at all for a man, or spirits if he wanted them, he had made up his mind that his children were not to learn to take them in their home." That, the young American told the father afterwards, had helped to convince him that it was wise to seek a wife from out this excellent household.

William Smith, as worker, as home-maker, interested me so deeply that I sounded him about his politics and about labour discontent and what he thought of it. But it was not easy to get "opinions" from him. About labour discontent he knew that it existed, but had no idea why. Life had unrolled itself out to him so simply—steady work, faithfully done; small pay, carefully expended; a happy home, tenderly guarded; a future happiness in the next world, to which he looked forward with the firm confidence that had

carried him through the adventures of life. "Problems" simply did not exist for him. He did not know whether wages were too low; he had found his sufficient, and was chiefly concerned that he had earned them honestly. He did not even know whether food prices had risen during his half-century of life in a city. That was the wife's business; there always had been meals, and if their character had changed with the times, it had been insensibly to him.

About politics he had three "principles": they were John Bright, Gladstone, Chamberlain. In very truth his political ideas consisted of a reverence for those three names, and a vague regret that things had changed since the old days, when "there were only the Tories and the True Blues." I did not ask him how he voted; I suspect that in those "old days" if he had a vote he gave it in turn to both parties. Clearly to him politics were solely a matter of leadership. To keep a shrine for Bright, Gladstone and Chamberlain showed no searchings into the validity of Free Trade or Tariff Reform, Liberalism or Conservatism. His mind called for just a leader of commanding personality.

William Smith seemed to me to be the typical worker. I met him in 1913. Most of the men I met in the army from 1915 to 1918 were of much the same character.

CHAPTER IV

ENGLAND OUT OF WORK—ON THE ROADS

In 1909, after I had seen much of the governing side of English life, I was glad to take a chance to find out about the men who were "down"; to see them on the roads seeking for work; and in the London slums, sometimes seeking to avoid work. I set out on a tramp which began at Durham, covered the country between there and Edinburgh, then to Glasgow, from Glasgow to the English border, then (because those wild Cumberland moors were more rich in scenery than in opportunities to study tramps) by train to Leeds, and then on foot through the Midlands to London, the metropolis of unemployment.

The purpose of the tramp was to catch the return ebb of the tide of workers which flows out from London when the harvest is ripe and comes back to live there for the winter; to study the casual worker and the unemployed on the road from his own level; to try then to come to some conclusion as to whether these men who are "down" were worth helping and as to how they could be helped.

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You must quench the spark of hope in your eye, you must make your gait an apology to the earth for your presence, before you can appear

to be a real unemployed. Otherwise no "make-up" however realistic, is sufficient. That was my first lesson in becoming a tramp. Dressed in an old jersey, patched and darned trousers, old heavy boots and a ragged cap, carrying a small kit rolled up in a bit of oiled cloth, unshaven as to chin and unkempt as to hair, I fancied myself to look a genuine out-of-work; as it was necessary that I should, so that for a few days I might share the lives and the confidences of the men on the roads.

But that fancy was mistaken. Walking through London streets towards the railway station (I was to "take off" at Durham, travelling there by train), I encountered many a surprised eye—and people rarely stare in London. At the station a porter wished to carry my absurd bundle. Evidently my "make-up" was a failure; it gave the impression of an eccentric, not of an unemployed. Little by little the points at which I was in fault disclosed themselves. You must not, as an unemployed, look the world in the face. You are down, and your eyes must keep down—down to the earth, as if searching its every yard for some trifling gift of luck to mitigate the harshness of life. Nor must you let any alertness show in your walk, nor spring in your step. You have nowhere in particular to go. No particular hope spurs you forward; you are drifting, and your pace must be that of drift.

With careful observation of the ways of the other fellow, the real fellow, I soon got to a more natural reading of my part. I learned to slip furtively along streets, to keep a down-bent gaze. After one day on the road and one night in a lodging-house which the police recommended to

me, but which was too unwholesome to permit of even an attempt to sleep, I was reassured as to my appearance by a woman in an eating house. She asked me in advance if I could pay for the food that I had ordered.

This was proof that I was not taken for some freak pedestrian. I had the proper "droop" for my rôle. Also, truth to tell, some of the fatalist spirit of the life began to creep into my blood and probably to show in my manner. I found, in spite of all hardships, a bright thread of fascination running through the shodden grey of the vagabonding life. The call comes, I suppose, through the dim years from remote ancestors, to return to a wandering and natural existence, to forget the cities and their bonds, to put out of mind duties, to be "placid and self-contained" as the animals are. One inescapable lesson of that tramp was the danger to a nation's character of allowing any large section of its population to get into the habit of living without work. After all, work is not a natural thing for man or any other animal. When Nature allows it, man will live without work. He has to be spurred to effort by hunger or ambition.

It came home to me with disquieting sureness that this, our civilisation, is but a thin veneer, and that at heart we are still savages. I actually feared at one time—a warm, bright day when the morning's search for work had failed, and my road-mate and I had, under a sweet-smelling hedge, eaten with eager hunger every crumb of a little package of food I had in my pocket—that I should not be ever content to go back again to the collars and the other harness of civilisation.

A subsequent wet day in the Midlands changed

that view considerably. But throughout my journey I was struck by the general kindness of folk towards the tramp. The policeman of England is very civil to the well-dressed man. To the man in ragged clothes he is kind as well as civil. "Aye, laddie," said a policeman in an English town to me, "how much can you pay?" And he put a kindly arm across my shoulder as he said it, and later added, "I'll show ye the way myself." I had asked him late at night where a poor traveller could get a "doss."

It was quite the usual experience to find this kindness and civility. The tramp can usually get a "lift" on the road. I should guess that he can, as a rule, get food too. I was offered food thrice, though I never begged for it, and accepted it only once—when I was allowed to clean down a horse in return. It was a big farm horse just in warm from the plough, and it was doubtless a little surprised to get a thorough "military style" rub down. The farmer, too, was surprised at this "runaway sailor" who understood horses, and was willing to work, and thought "he might find me a steady job if I stayed long."

It is worth recording that there is not in England the provision there ought to be for the casual worker or the poorly-paid permanent hand. Every large town should have its "working man's hotels," with clean beds and baths, at a cheap rate. The "common lodging-houses" which the casual worker and tramp frequent in the English provinces are generally noisome and must encourage crime and shiftlessness as well as disease. There is a good moral effect in clean walls and soap; a depressing influence on character in dirt and vermin.

In a notebook which I shall always cherish as a tally of humble and brave lives there are records of twenty-seven mates on the road—men with whom I walked and talked and sought work. Of the twenty-seven there is only one who stands out as a "waster." Later, clustering in the great hive of London, I found in droves the "cunning unemployed"—the men who have mastered the art of living in a squalid kind of content without work. But on the road only one man out of twenty-seven showed badly.

In the north, out from Durham—the slow, deep breathing of the ventilating shafts of the pits telling of colliery country—I was on the road by seven o'clock, walking briskly through a keen, frosty air. I picked up my first mate plodding patiently along, two miles out of the old cathedral city. He was something a little higher than a casual labourer, and had a "trade," if one might call it so: that of a draper's porter. That is to say, he carried round parcels for drapers. He was making out from Durham, where "things were very bad," to a country place, unspecified, where there was hope of work.

A brave and cheerful soul he was. At the age of four his leg had been broken and badly set, and he had grown up a little lame. That was over forty years ago, when the poor had less chance of good medical attention than now. The accident had frustrated the wish in him for an outdoor life. He confessed that all his thoughts turned to the soil, and while he was working as a draper's porter, he would, in slack times, always try to get out to the fields. He had never married; there was no hope of married life in his calling. He had tried

to get a more steady sort of job as a painter, then as an ironmonger's assistant; but his lame leg was against him. He had not a grumble in his whole composition, and talked cheerfully of the green grass and confided that he was forty-six. "But I don't look it a bit, do I?" I lied manfully that he did not seem more than thirty-five, though, poor, wizened little chap, I would have put him down at ten years above his real age.

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From a hedge-side we were hailed by a man who wanted a match. He was making for Newcastle-on-Tyne, and I suggested to him to walk along with us. No, we were walking too fast. He was a colliery worker from Staffordshire, and had been out of work for three months. "And," he added, "I am —— sure I am not going into a —— pit again."

I asked what sort of a job he was looking for, and he answered "Any job" in a way which meant "No job." He was convinced that "the —— country was rotten," and he didn't care. They would have to keep him anyhow. He was a healthy, vigorous-seeming young fellow, in age perhaps thirty, his eye and complexion suggesting that he knew what it was to be drunk now and again. When he found that I had no tobacco he would not be induced to walk along the high road, but turned off into a lane. His destination for the night he had not determined and did not care. "I have got my kip all right" (tapping his pocket); "I'll soon pick up my tommy." He meant that he had fourpence for a doss ("kip") somewhere that night, and that "tommy" meant food.

Probably there was a better chance of picking that up off the main road.

Of that type of "unemployed" I met only that one on the roads. He showed in rough contrast to the patient little fighter at my side, who had with his lame leg kept up somehow with the ranks of the workers, and had never begged a meal nor a shilling in his life, and was, in a way, happy, for all his frustrated longing for the open life of the country.

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Going out from Newcastle-on-Tyne the next day I picked up with a worker in the building trade. He was not a tramp, for he had a house of his own and a wife of whose housewifery he was very proud. But he was unemployed, and had been so for some weeks. That morning he had got up at five o'clock to tramp eight miles to a suburb of Newcastle in the hope of getting a place on a little church-repairing job employing three masons. He had not succeeded, and was tramping the eight miles back again. A penny fare on the tram would have saved him some two miles, but pennies were not to be so lightly spent.

A homely, domestic man, typically English in his virtues and in the limitations of his virtues, was my mason friend. In the good times of the past he used to make 35s., 37s. 6d. and £2 1s. 6d. a week at his trade, "steady work and constant." As a bachelor he found that all his money went as fast as he made it. After one long spell on £2 1s. 6d. a week he had nothing at all left to tide over a week without work. That set his thoughts to matrimony, and he "settled down."

Since then his finances had been much more steady. While he was in work he always paid his wife 30s. a week out of his wages, no more and no less. "He didn't come asking her for some of it back in the middle of the week like some men did. Thirty shillings she had, regular, when he was in work, and she saved some of it." Whatever the balance was—5s. or 7s. 6d. or 11s. 8d.—was for himself. That was his pocket-money, and he spent it in a moderate and sensible roystering and on the comforts of the manly life.

The virtues of his wife as a housekeeper he talked of sturdily. Such a thing as baker's bread —"nasty, unwholesome stuff"—was never seen in his house: it was all home-baked bread. Part of the secret of the housekeeping in unemployed times was, perhaps, the fact that they had two lodgers, who paid 3s. 6d. a week each for their quarters and paid for the "raw material" of their meals, having the food cooked free. I was interested to learn that 11½d. a week was charged to each of the lodgers for the flour used in his bread—not an extravagant weekly expenditure on that item of food.

A good, average man this, not at all heroic; common-sensible and strictly moderate in his virtues; keeping a very good margin of his wages for himself, but not poaching on the remainder. Probably his wife had much the harder life of the two, with her 30s. a week steady when the good man is in work, and nothing at all but the lodgers' money at other times.

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From Newcastle I made my way to Edinburgh, and then to Glasgow looking for harvesting work.

On the road one day some eight miles out from Glasgow, a steam wagon passed, drawing a load of empty milk cans. A tramp a few yards away hailed it and jumped on. There was no protest from the man in charge. I sprinted after the clattering monster and jumped on too. Again the driver signalled his permission, and I chummed up with my companion of the road.

He was friendly and communicative—a baker by trade, a casual worker in England and Scotland these many years, because he could not get steady work at that trade. He was married; his wife lived in a town while he tramped around seeking odd jobs. He had just had two days' harvesting, and was off to Kilmarnock in the hope of getting a spell of work in the cornfields near there. Sympathetically he probed for my confidence in return, and not getting it dropped the subject, concluding I had something to conceal. He offered me tobacco, pulling out a tiny scrap of twist. When I refused it he seemed to think that I was too poor to own a pipe, and carefully cleaned his own on his trousers and offered it to me on loan.

A real gentleman was this casual harvester. The steam wagon stopped while the driver and stoker had lunch at a roadside inn. My friend and I quenched our thirst with water at a pump near by, and he took me into a field and with a bundle of grass showed me all the mysteries of tying sheaves of corn. That was the job we were most likely to get, it seemed. And, according to him, it was simple enough. Anyhow, he would watch and see that I did it right at first when we got a job.

So I found myself fathered by this poor chap,

with a scrap of tobacco (the money for his last two days' work had been left with his wife) between him and destitution. He did not seem to think of the effect on his own chances of taking on an incompetent apprentice.

Some eight miles out of Kilmarnock the quick-pulsing rattle of a reaper, its noise something between that of a motor-car and a railway train, told of corn being cut. We dropped off the steam wagon and followed our ears to the hope of a job. Alas! The machine was a binder as well as a reaper. It did its own tying. I felt, as we noted this, all the ignorant hate of labour-saving machinery, the mention of which had often before filled me with polite astonishment. I *knew* then why the working man often ignorantly looks upon machinery as a curse.

We tramped across fields to another farm, guided again by the clatter of the reaper, again to find that it was also a binder. An irregular little farm on a hill-side in the distance seemed to suggest reaping by scythe. We tried, and found that they were not going to cut for three days and they had all their hands "trysted." This meant that, while not actually engaged, certain men had been spoken to, asked to attend, and would be given first preference when work started. In all we called at five places; at the fifth there was a gleam of hope. The daughter of the house said that harvesting started on the morrow. But father was away; he would be back at five. My mate suggested we should wait. If we were engaged we would get something to eat and probably be allowed to sleep in the barn. It was now nearly three.

"Look," I said, "I have got a shilling or two.

Let's go into Kilmarnock and get something to eat."

In the life of a "casual" I suppose surprises are common and cease to surprise. My mate started to walk without a word, sticking first a bit of paper on a gatepost. It was nearly five minutes before he said:

"So really you don't smoke."

I understood the train of reasoning. Knowing that I had money and no tobacco he knew that I did not smoke. I sought certainty about the bit of paper. Yes, it was intended as a landmark. I found later, on suggesting that we should make back from Kilmarnock for the farm across the fields, that this man who for fifteen years, nearly, had been a tramp and an agricultural worker, could not find his way across country by landmarks, but had to nose painfully along highroads, searching for a bit of paper or some such mark. It struck me as curious, for surely every man should be able to guide himself by the sun and the stars and the natural features of the landscape.

We had a big meal at Kilmarnock, and walked back to the farm. The farmer did not take us on. He had enough hands. The grim way he looked upon us made it hopeless to suggest a "doss" in the barn. It was too late to look elsewhere for work. To sleep under a hedge did not suggest itself to me as a necessary bit of realism. But I could not go to a lodging-house and leave my kindly mate to that fate. Perhaps my companionship had prevented him from getting a job, though we had tried hard enough. I dropped enough of the mask to press upon him a few shillings and to make an appointment to eat with him at

Kilmarnock at noon the next day if he did not get a job in the morning, of which he had great hopes. So we parted. He did not appear the next day, by which I knew that he had got some work.

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After leaving Scotland I took train from Carlisle to Leeds. I left the north feeling that tramping in search of work was not so bad as I had imagined. The weather had been fine as a rule, and one afternoon, the morning having been spent in a sincere search for work, I lazed deliciously on a purling reach of the Ayr—woods on one side, cornfields on the other. Of "jobs" I had been offered three within a week, one of them (on a farm) "steady," though at what wage was not mentioned. In Scotland the lodging-houses had been, as a rule, clean, and the men of the road decent fellows, keen on getting work.

There had been, too, something appealing to the imagination in attending, as I did twice in the early morning, "at the Cross" of a town where men in search of work assembled and employers in search of workers came. On the whole, I thought, it is not a bad life, that of a casual harvest worker in the autumn—if you have a few shillings in your pocket as a safeguard against a run of bad luck.

The Midlands changed my view of the tramp's life considerably. The Midlands were frankly horrible, from the first morning when I was wakened to a dismal, smoky dawn by the iron-shod heels of the toilers on the pavement below my lodging-house as they hurried to their work. I had spent a shilling on that lodging, and it was a nightmare

of garish dirtiness. Three days I put in walking through grimy city after grimy city, the pavements seeming never to end, the suburbs of one town stretching out lank arms to greet those of another. Footsore and depressed, I occasionally shirked my task by taking a stretch on a tramway-car.

After two days of dull, sunless weather, in which the sky was obscured by what might have been fog and might have been smoke, a drizzling rain set in, and the misery of the towns was complete. In the Midlands thickly growing chimneys take the place of trees, and from the tops of their great harsh trunks float thin wisps of black foliage. The streets are of a miserable muddiness which bemires without softening the hardness of the pavements. Through smoky, dirty, wet air, pallid faces loom. The very meat in the shops has no red wholesomeness, but looks ghostly and anæmic; that, I suppose, is really due to the fact that the people of the Midlands so largely eat pork, but it amused my misery to think that the inanimate stuff in the butchers' shops also feels the depression of this smoke-palled district and knows not the red of life.

It does not help to patience to know that much of the evil is curable. Sheffield is a brighter, more sunny town than most in the Midlands, because its authorities insist on something being done to mitigate the smoke nuisance. In some of the other towns factories can pour out unchecked their defiling streams, poisoning the air and darkening the sky so that the birds leave the district in despair, no green thing flourishes, and men see their children grow up pale and unwholesome.

The men on the road in the Midlands were sharply divided into two classes: the quite hopelessly "down" men drifting from workhouse to workhouse; and unemployed mechanics driven out of their workshops by loss of trade and tramping around looking for work. Usually these latter were Trade Unionists and had some small unemployed pay to rely upon. But it did not "run to" railway journeys; and so they tramped from town to town.

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After leaving the Midlands, approaching London from the north, the pall of smoke lifts and the heavens appear. A broad belt of agricultural land surrounds London. It would seem as though the traveller were passing away from, not approaching, the great industrial centre of England. Leaving Luton and coming through St. Albans, the country in autumn smiles with green and gold pleasantness. Birds see the sky and rejoice. Hay-ricks warm the landscape with their golden yellow, and over the stubble fields sturdy plough-horses pass and repass, painting the fields a rich chocolate brown with their broad brush strokes. The hedges, too, glow with berries.

I met one man making a harvest of the berries. He was an old tramp, hobbling along quickly in spite of the stiffness coming from rheumatism. He had a can to fill with what he gleaned from the hedges. He hoped, he told me, to get a shilling for the berries at the next town, Barnet. His age was sixty-six and he had been in his young prime a navvy and road labourer. Proudly he boasted that he had never been "in trouble" and had

never actually begged, though in the main he lived on charity. His winters were spent in the workhouses. With the coming of the spring he turned his face towards the green fields, and lived somehow through the summer on what he could pick up as the reward of doing odd jobs or as the doles of charity. He was one of a class I found common enough on the roads, past all steady and useful work, going with crippled gait to the grave.

The same day I encountered, among other wayfarers, a man who suggested this old and desolate tramp in the making. He was a young, vigorous and capable fellow, civil, intelligent, and very eager for work. He had walked from Manchester, having been on the road six days, and the golden goal at the end of his journey was a week's work at the Islington Agricultural Show, which had been promised to him. For the week he would get 30*s*. After the Islington Show he had the chance, perhaps, of getting another job in the same line. He followed Agricultural Shows around the country, for he understood cattle and horses.

CHAPTER V

ENGLAND OUT OF WORK—IN LONDON

To the "professional unemployed" I believe the autumn entry into London is a blessed relief. He knows all the charities which can be worked for food and shelter. He has put in his penitential period in the country to give a reasonable air to the tale that he has been in work, and prepares with zest to tap the old spring of alms. London promises him winter comfort, human companionship; warm nights in shelters, where politics can be discussed and the state of the nation learnedly argued; interesting tests of his skill in bamboozling charitable societies. To the genuine seeker for work a first impression of London must be terrifying. The place is so vast, so inchoate. It suggests a massed crowd into which no new-comer can hope to penetrate.

The evening I entered London "looking for work" a thin rain filled the air with a blurring mist, and made a horrible mud under foot. Too realistic boots gave this mud entrance to my feet. The soft, suggy sound and the feel of this mud making its way in and out was at once depressing and enraging. I cursed the weather, and London, and the resolution which had brought me on this enterprise. It seemed as if it would be just Heaven to have clean feet and a stout sole between them and the loathsome dirt. I was wet through

as regards clothes. That did not matter. The rain from above was clean except for a little soot. But the stuff beneath—faugh ! If other men think and feel as I do, when you wish to " lift " a man out of the mire of hopelessness give him first a stout pair of boots.

The Spitalfields " doss " to which I had been directed looked too much like the mud beneath felt. It was stale and dirty, from its ceiling to its floor, and all the air between was stale and dirty. The men steaming and smoking in the thick atmosphere were sympathetic to the place. I passed on. That doss could be investigated another time, on some night when the streets were dry. At a " Rowton House " in Whitechapel I found a fairly clean and endurable lodging, paying ninepence for the night's shelter. There were good facilities to wash and to eat and to cook one's food, and a reading-room even. One could be, clearly, comfortable enough here—if only one had the ninepence.

In the London doss-houses you meet, sprinkled among the genuine objects of compassion, many " cunning " unemployed, who make a profession of being out of work and find it a fairly comfortable profession too, according to their views of comfort. In China they have the term " rice Christians " for heathens who pretend conversion to Christianity in order to secure food from the missionaries. The cunning unemployed is usually a " rice " Anglican, or " rice " Roman Catholic, or " rice " Wesleyan. His religious views are strong to the point of bigotry. But should he have a wife and household to maintain it will often happen that, while he is a " rice " Anglican of the

most uncompromising type, she is a "rice" Wesleyan or professor of some other type of Nonconformity.

For a man who has made a study of the art of living without work, London offers a vast field. There are so many charities that, by going the round of them, it is possible to avoid the danger of becoming too familiar at any one, and since there is no effective safeguard against overlapping it is easy to be getting help from two, or even more, sources simultaneously. This state of affairs, of course, does not help the genuine unemployed, the man who wants work and not charity. But it is a constant temptation to him to drop his self-respect and sink to the level of the men who, he finds, live almost as comfortably without labour as he is able to do by steady industry.

The life of "toiling for leave to live," using up to-day for just as much reward as will allow you to be fit for work to-morrow—and that is the life of millions in this country—has, after all, not much attraction, considered dispassionately. The tramp in Mr. Wells's story who explained that it was followed only by people who had been "pithed," i.e. had had their brains extracted while at school, had some grim reasonableness in his argument. When honest work offers a hope of progressive betterment the enthusiasm for it is natural. When, as for too many in England, honest work offers nothing but a subsistence fractionally better than that of the dishonest loafer, it is surprising, not that there are so many, but so few, of the "cunning unemployed." Only a very strong innate sense of duty and self-respect can account for the fact that millions keep pressing desperately on in the ranks of the workers with no

more real reward for their efforts than pride in the fact that they have never been to the "workhouse" nor have taken alms from anyone.

The provision for the homeless in London seemed to me so ample that I could not at first find an explanation for the Thames Embankment miserables who huddle on the seats throughout the nights and have their shivering sleep disturbed again and again by the police, or for the unfortunates who haunt "the dark arches" of the Strand and other places giving shelter from the rain. With the use of any intelligence at all, it seemed, a man could get shelter of a sort and food of a sort. Yet people, I knew, did in rare cases actually perish from exposure and from hunger in London. Inquiring among the Embankment men, the unhappiest of all the miserable army, there seemed to be always one of two explanations for haunting the Embankment—either the desperate sense of shame of the man who has come down from a position of some comfort and decency and shuns the light because it means a display of his misery; or the dull lethargy that comes from extreme hardship and kills every suggestion of self-help.

One unemployed with whom I conversed, or tried to converse, at midnight on the Embankment just near the Temple, was sunk in such apathy that he, I verily believe, would not have walked four hundred yards to get the most comfortable bed in London. At any rate when I gave him a shilling he made no move away from his seat, showed, indeed, very little interest in the dole. His was an extreme case, but many seemed to be almost as dead to any idea of effort. "With the use of any intelligence" a man can get shelter—

yes. But the man who is down often loses his intelligence as he sinks. The "cunning" unemployed flourishes. The man with some sense of self-respect, for whom help should be, is prevented by his very virtues from taking advantage of help.

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After a fortnight on the roads (in the late autumn of 1909) I had entered London full of compassion for the victims of unemployment, full of certainty that the remedy was simple—food and shelter for the small percentage of hopelessly wrecked so that they might die in peace; improved national organisation to offer chances of work to the others, eagerly willing to work and capable of some sort of labour. The next fortnight, spent mostly in prowling around the East End doss-houses, at Labour Bureaux, and by the dock-sides, gave an inkling of the complications of the problem. It disclosed a class that was quite willing to be unemployed and could make quite a comfortable living out of the game, and it further disclosed the shocking lack of national thrift which allows the unemployed class to be constantly recruited from the growing youths of the big cities. The man on the road was a small evil compared with this vast mass of the city unemployed, most of them worthy; a proportion impudent loafers; all of them nearly with a "droop" in their characters that comes from waiting for work and the thriftlessness that comes from the want of surety as to the next day's wages.

One phase of the London unemployed I studied at Covent Garden early in the morning. There

collect many of the casuals who seek to make a living by selling things in the streets—flowers, fruit, vegetables, matches, toys. They buy some poor stuff at the market and sell it, rather on the plea of their misery than of its value. This street-vending is often a mask for mere begging. It merges from that, by many grades, into legitimate commerce.

A favoured form of relief by charitable organisations is to give a man enough to buy a quantity of something which he will peddle at a profit. It is a well-meant but unhappy form of charity. Certainly the man is thus kept busy. But he produces nothing, and interferes with the livelihood of the traders who have made a regular calling of trade.

I studied at Covent Garden early in the morning the nature of the industry which has one of its chief head-quarters there. It is a neighbourhood of incongruities. The fruit and flower market jostles for space with the Opera House and with a number of publishing offices. One "unemployed" I noticed reading a page from *Country Life* displayed in a window and describing one of those beautiful country houses which are the most gracious features of England. He seemed to have come to the market, like many others there, in the hope of picking up some food rather than of getting work, though there are casual jobs going as well as opportunities for street vending.

It may have been—it probably was—mere fancy on my part to imagine that the forlorn and frowsy man was reading that page because he felt the desire in him to get away from the aimless, sordid life of a city unemployed into the clean,

industrious life in the country. But it was my whim so to imagine, as prompting to some thought of how much is done to make unemployed, how little is done to save effectively the unemployed.

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England starts to make the unemployed at a very early stage of life. In a great number of households the earnings of the breadwinner keep, as a matter of custom, very close to the margin of subsistence. That leads to the child being rushed into a wage-earning occupation at the earliest possible age, to take a place in the army of errand boys, street sellers, or mere vagrant hunters for casual pennies. He has learned no trade; in his child-employment he can learn none. His future is to be a casual worker, and then an unemployed.

An errand boy, with the help of brains and great strength of character and some luck, finds the life sharpening to his wits and rises out of it to be a prosperous tradesman, then perhaps an alderman, a member of Parliament, a knight, and to adorn with his portrait some treatise on "Self-help" which, unintentionally, preaches the doctrine that what is possible for the one in a million is also possible for all that million, and, therefore, makes a totally undesirable start in life wise and useful.

Apprenticeship falls more and more out of fashion in Great Britain. When a lad is apprenticed it is not usually before sixteen; and that leaves a gap of two or three years between school and workshop, during which time he is learning everything than can prejudice his future. A clergyman in the East End suggested as one

remedy for the unemployed "universal compulsory apprenticeship." He did not go into details of how that could be effected, and I do not think that it is feasible; but to encourage apprenticeship should certainly be the aim of national organisation. A necessary thing is to re-establish the responsibility that the employer used to recognise, to give a post to his apprentice when he has "served his time." It is a dishonesty for firms to use apprentice labour as a kind of cheap labour and to send a lad adrift when he comes to the full wage-earning stage: it is a dishonesty that I believe used to be rare in England and is still rare where old ideals survive, but it is becoming more common.

When the citizen has reached the stage of a "casual" a great amount of well-meaning effort is directed towards making him an "unemployable." As a casual, he, of course, is very often unemployed, and since his work periods give him no great margin over subsistence level—he has to ask for help when an unemployed spell comes. If, in the first instance, that help were made real and thorough, a help towards self-reliance, many a good life now wasted would be saved. But an exactly contrary policy is pursued. The unemployed may get charity. If he does, it is just sufficient to keep him alive for a certain term. Or he may get "relief work." If he does it is calculated to teach him nothing, and again only serves to keep him alive. He passes from the charity or the relief work a shade worse off as regards character and fitness to play a man's part in the struggle for life. Each spell of charity has had further the demoralising effect of teaching him that it is possible to live without work.

"Relief works" have the evil effect of discouraging independent labour. As a rule they resolve themselves into apportioning out some work, which would in the ordinary way fall to the lot of a small body of regular workers, among a great body of unemployed, who are engaged for a couple of days a week in rotation. The work is usually done inefficiently and expensively. Its devotion to "relief" purposes deprives of their chance of work some regular toilers. They see the men who hang around relief centres in the cities getting the chance which is denied to their independent efforts, and they are tempted to lean upon charity.

The multiplication of charitable bodies makes the lot of the lazy unemployed easy without doing much to help the genuine worker. This multiplication is due in part to the natural desire of various Churches to have their own organisations to relieve the poor of their own denominations—in part to a vulgar social ambition. There is no easier way for the snob to creep into "society" than by means of a charity and to start a new charity is an easy way to social advancement.

I have sought the views of clergymen working in the East End. They were all proud and justifiably so, of the various efforts made to salve the lot of the poor—the university settlements, the hospitals, infirmaries, nursing associations, charitable and semi-charitable dormitories, the associations for the supply of food, clothing, coal, and the like. But not one, challenged to it, could truthfully claim that the sum of all this work was remedial in any real sense of the word. Not one of them could deny that most of it directly

attacked the principle of self-reliance. The wretched were kept alive, and that was all. No future was opened out for the great majority of them.

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During the Great War unemployment practically ceased, though the gravest conditions of industrial stagnation had been forecasted and in a measure provided against. There was work for everyone; even the least competent could get something to do; and the patriotic enthusiasm common to all classes prevented any great amount of shirking. After the Armistice a difficulty in finding employment for the demobilised sailors and soldiers was anticipated and elaborate provision was made to support the workless of the community during the transition period from war to peace. But the prophets were again confounded and there was a keen demand for labour, owing to the world's rush to restock its depleted stores, and to the call to make up arrears in home equipment. The effect of the extensive dole system was, however, to discourage all inclination to tackle the strenuous task of consolidating the victory of the battle-field. The demand for labour could not be met. Production fell off and the seeds were sown of the depression which came very soon to bring the unemployed again before the British people as an acute problem.

To-day (the end of 1922) the unemployed are more numerous than at any previous time in the nation's history. They are, too, less patient of hardship than in the pre-war years; and more tolerant of living on charity. They suffer from the results of four years of thoroughly bad political

leadership which sapped at the national self-respect in every class of life. If they are not to become a serious danger to the security of the community—they are already a reproach to its good sense—their case will have to be considered with more courage and statesmanship than is shown by a policy of supporting them in some sort of way by a levy on the too-scanty means of the rest of the population. An essential part of a wise unemployment policy would move five millions of men, women and children from Great Britain, where there is no reasonable probability of their getting a chance of really happy lives, to the empty lands under our flag. They should be moved reasonably, comfortably, after some preliminary training here and with adequate organisation on the other side to give them there the reasonable amenities of life. In effect, the nation, which made the wonderful New Armies mainly out of the factory hands of the industrial centres, should set itself to organise on similar lines Newer Armies of migrants. They would have some preliminary training at home. As they went to "the front" they would be preceded by pioneer battalions and move into roughly comfortable camps. On their "battle-fields" they would be sure of their rations. Their "warfare" would be against the forces of Nature, not against a human enemy. As armies they would win through, though here and there an individual would fail.

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CHAPTER VI

THE ENGLISH CHARACTER

THERE is in Great Britain not yet a British character. (Perhaps the Australian character gives a hint as to the type of the ultimate British character, for it is the product of a blend in almost equal proportions of English, Scottish and Irish blood.) The predominant character in the British islands is the English and to it the characters of the Irish and the Scottish and the Welsh must generally conform if they wish to win *and hold* a high place. In conforming to it they may modify it; but in certain basic respects they become English.

This I know is an heretical opinion. The orthodox opinion is that England is inhabited chiefly by the English but is managed by the smaller nationalities of the British islands. It is an opinion which the Englishman does nothing to discourage. Provided that things are managed as he wishes them to be, according to his general ideas, he is willing to employ Scots and Welsh and Irish to do his work for him and to get all the advertisement out of it that may please them. One may picture him as the *Theos* of Plato, too large-minded to be discontented that Aphrodité or Ares or Pallas Athené gets the credit and worship for this and that, so long as the Universe is conducted according to his plan.

This English character is the most admirable in the world for dealing with savage and simple peoples. It is very aggravating, on a first acquaintance, to peoples of a more sophisticated type. On a better acquaintance it generally wins its way to the approval, if not the affection, of reasonable men. They ignore, if they cannot forgive, its Olympian pose because of its very evident justice, good-humour and practicalness.

It is Olympian but not self-assertive. The lack of self-assertiveness in the English character is curiously noticeable in the overseas Dominions. In any Australian city you may find Highland Societies, and Hibernian Societies and sometimes Welsh Societies but never English Societies. The English colonist has too sure a pride, and perhaps too keen a sense of humour, to seek to proclaim the land of his nativity. I recall an Irishman mourning to me once over this English characteristic. "They are not the people we are," he said half gloomily, half humorously. "Time and often we up and swept them almost off the face of Ireland: and then it was the Irish way of us to fall to asserting ourselves as to who deserved the greatest glory of the fight. And while we were at that shindy, back the Englishmen came and took all that they had lost and more. It was not their worry at all, at all, who was the man to deserve most of the glory."

Often I have been present, usually a silent dissenter, whilst the "stupid Englishman" was torn to pieces in a friendly way. His slowness, his lack of enterprise, his dullness, his "stodginess" have been noted by American, Canadian, Irish, Scottish or Australian critics. Usually I

have remained silent, but now and again have had to remark what I thought: "Yet, curiously, these stupid, unimaginative people have done the biggest things ever recorded in history."

The Englishman would not say that for himself. He never condescends to defend himself and is his own most serious detractor. He delights to represent his country as always going to the dogs. He growls at his own characteristics, partly because the love of a civil growl is inherent in the English temperament and is illustrated by Pinero's definition of the ideal Club secretary as "one who gives members every excuse but no reason to grumble."

In seeking an approximation to the truth as to the English character it is unsafe therefore to take the Englishman's expressed view of himself, for it is too depreciatory and also unsafe to take his real, secret-heart view, for that is too arrogant for him to confess even to himself.

My observations on the Englishman at home before the Great War fell insensibly, I found, into the form of a series of comparisons with the Englishman out on the edges of the Empire, doing its big work without fuss, without *blague*, but with a resourceful courage undaunted by any hardship. It was not an easy standard for the home-living folk to meet, and they failed in some particulars.

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The Englishman at home (both in the city and the country) of that time had, in the mass, many uselessnesses. These seemed to have been almost deliberately acquired; at any rate, they depended very closely upon his national policy, which was

that the aim for nation or individual is to find out the things that best fit the energies, and to centre attention on those to the neglecting of all else. You are born into the world with the gift to manipulate the machine which puts points on to pins and that is your life-work. Your nation, following the same principle, must find out the things that it can best do in competition with all other nations—cotton-weaving, iron-founding, coal-mining—and become the nation for that work and nothing else. That is the formula.

I must not be tempted into a disquisition on the economic standing of that theory; as to whether it is likely in the end to be commercially profitable or otherwise. But I wish to give an opinion on what seem to have been its effects, its results on English national character. The answer to the question as to whether it is more profitable to a man or to a nation to aim at a complete life or at a special expertness as one little cog-wheel in a vast machine depends on what is the view taken as to the purpose of life. Is life something to be lived or is life something to be devoted to the manufacture of so many yards of cotton twilling? I think that that issue should be quietly and deeply considered before even a thought is given to any question of what method will best help the production of cotton twilling.

If life is primarily to be lived, then every man should seek to be as fit and complete a man as possible, his ultimate ideal being, on the mental side, some appreciation of the beautiful in nature and in art; on the physical side, a mastery of all the common circumstances of life. To be able to guide a horse; govern (and indeed to build, perhaps

roughly) a boat; win a shelter with one's hands from the woods; gain food where shops and money are not; light quickly and economically a fire wherewith to warm and to cook—that should be the aim of the man who sees life as a heritage to be enjoyed sanely and wholesomely. The aim, I say, not always the accomplishment; for circumstances may not be so kind as to give us all of our ideal.

That the man of English race has that ideal in his blood his colonising spirit shows; his glad acceptance of pioneering life overseas shows. My heart has often warmed to notice, "out-back" in Australia, the quick development of the helpless young Englishman. He comes with a drawl in his speech suggesting that the words have difficulty in crawling through the tunnel of his collar; with socks suggesting an unsober rainbow; and he grows in a few months into a browned man, brown of face and clothes, whose rare words come out sharply and who can do anything that the other fellow can do.

That was, I think, the key-note of the old English character—to wish to be able to do anything that the other fellow could do. If the Danes fight in ships, we shall have ships. If the Normans have new and deadly ways of fighting, we shall learn them. But that ideal had apparently gone out of the average Englishman at home in the first decade of the twentieth century. I must write "apparently," for in 1914 there was a sudden change which showed that, after all, it was not lost, only latent.

Talking in 1910 with an army officer of wide experience of all parts of the Empire, I expressed

a doubt as to the necessity of the long terms of military training he was advocating. He answered: "But remember, you start with your Australian recruit a long way ahead of our English recruit. Your Australian knows how to look after himself, to take cover, to get across country, to act for himself; also, generally, he knows about horses. Our Englishman ordinarily knows nothing of these." It was surely a heavy indictment!

I presume acceptance as a first principle of the belief that life for an individual is, primarily, something to be lived; that this applies to a nation also, and that if the issue is between being the greatest shop on earth and gaining 2½d., and being a self-contained nation of quite wholesome citizens and losing the 2½d, it is better to lose the coppers and save your nation's soul alive. Of course some people do not admit that. They are for the 2½d. all the time, and as to souls, would search the Dictionary of Statistics and the Dictionary of Economics, find no entry under "souls" and look very pityingly upon any further mention of the word. But on the assumption that the object of national life is the best citizen, not the cheapest yard of cloth and the cut-price bedroom basin, the Mother Country surely was on the wrong track for many years before the Great War.

The Englishman I found at home in 1909 had many points of superiority of character over the Englishman who had been reared in the Overseas Dominions. But it was a fact that the Australian, following different ideals in national organisation, making the complete citizen and not the cheap product the standard for attainment, was individually more competent to enjoy, to maintain, and

to defend his life than the Englishman of the same class. No other nation had so much sacrificed its fields for its factories as England. Most other nations had attempted to limit the deadening effects on national character of the machinery era by insisting on some military service, or some gymnastic training, or both, for all citizens. But the political system of England deliberately set itself to change men into "hands."

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No, it did not succeed. There remained in the national character an ineradicable love of the manly life. One could see in the enthusiasm over the Boy Scouts, the instinctive desire of the people to be close to nature. The city boys seized on any chance to try to grow up to be men and not "hands." And the Englishman kept in his heart a hankering after the country life. The rural immigrant to the industrial centres who, in the crowded city, aspired to a bit of garden, had left in him some of the healthy earth tang.

Study of a Bank Holiday on London's "Playground"—Hampstead Heath—suggested to me the idea of the Englishman as naturally a lover of the land, but frustrated of his purpose in life. The uncouth, almost orgiastic, gaiety of the multitudes poured out from the factories was depressing, until its hidden meaning was plain, and then it inspired sympathy. These were country lads and lassies clowning, as their forefathers had done, on village greens. With the factory clothes, the vast crowds, the air laden with city dust and soot, it was ugly. Shifted to its right country setting and it would have been wholesome enough, natural

enough—the dancing, practical joking, screaming, shouting, rough pleasantries. It was an agricultural fair in grotesque.

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The English character seems to me to be naturally conservative, to cherish very fondly the things of the past. Modern days and conditions call for new things. The new things come, but reverent care is taken to preserve the old. No flood of commerce, be it ever so mighty, is allowed to overwhelm any old church which rears its tower as a grey *memento mori* in London. The stream of traffic must part and, washing as it may the sides of the house of prayer, never encroach on its hallowed acre. I do not think that for any reason of convenience at all would London sacrifice one of her old monuments.

This spirit of kindly reverence for the past is at once proof of dignity and of good-heartedness. Is it ungracious to add that sometimes and in some respects there is a danger of it degenerating into a Chinese attitude towards antiquity? It is good to respect tombs; unwise to worship them. The street names of London show a regard for old memories that is a little ridiculous. When the world was younger and London was less populous than Sydney now is, the Englishman had the wish, which he still preserves, to keep himself sole and private. Then, as now, he would take a corner seat in a public conveyance because that gave him a wall on one side; and would carefully search for an empty table at an eating-house, if there were no friends of his there. This spirit led him to keep his house as secluded as possible, and it

seemed to help this seclusion if it had a street, a place, a square to itself, or as nearly to itself as might be.

Hence a strange multiplication of street names. Every little stretch of street had a title of its own. Now in this monster city, affording dwelling-places to the numbers of a nation, most of these street names have been preserved. Following a thoroughfare in a direct line you will find its name constantly changing. It is still the same street palpably, but every now and again it takes a new name.

I give you what I think is the rational explanation of the fact. Possibly though, it is due to a desire to test the resources of the admirable British Post Office. So many are the streets, places, squares, that the same names have to be used again and again. There are, for instance, twenty Albert Streets, Gates, Squares, Roads, Terraces, or Embankments in London (where a street may be called a street, a gate, a square, a circus, a road, a garden, a walk, a yard, a mews, a grove, a row, an embankment or a place, and still be a street). There are fifteen Cambridges, eight Edwards, twenty-one Gloucesters, twelve St. James's, eight Thomases, twelve Warwicks and so on. All this must provide a great stimulus to Post Office energy. In any other city there would be a proposal to sweep away all these confusing street names; to insist on a street keeping to one title for all its course; and to abolish "doubles."

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These were my first impressions of the English character: that much of the manhood of the

nation was suffering from too close a devotion to factory life: that the nation was still in its heart wedded to the land and the sea: and that the nation kept a real love for the past.

I tried later to get a clear idea of the "social spirit" as between classes. A consideration of this social spirit is of the first importance in judging the state of a nation. It is of far more moment than trade figures or armaments. It is the soul; they are but the banking account and the weapons. On that point, I did not actually expect to see London streets paraded by insolent nobles chanting—

"Down, down, you low and middle classes."

as they publicly oppressed the poor and the humble. But I did seriously think that, coming from a country where social conditions are generally very even, my sympathies would have to withstand the strain of an invidious class division.

That was an error. There was a singular degree of social amenity in England. There were obviously serious discrepancies between merit and reward; some great gaps to be bridged between the very rich and the very poor. But on both sides of the dividing line, there seemed to be a general desire for betterment, the one class honestly anxious for any ameliorative action of which the wisdom could be shown, the other patiently confident of an ultimate social adjustment. The rich, as a class, had a sense of duty; the poor, as a class, had a sense of confidence in the leaders of the community.

This was helped by the tradition of sport being carried into all sorts of social and business

relations. What " isn't cricket " is generally reprobated. The passion, indeed, for fair play is carried almost to excess. It interferes a little, I should say, with national efficiency in some of the sterner tasks of life ; but it is very admirable and suggestive of a good reserve of strength. It is the feeling of the man who considers that he can give away a point or two and still win.

A by-product of British fair-play is a great generosity towards old favourites. I was struck by a conversation on Mr. Trumper the cricketer, at a club luncheon table one day in 1909. I had hazarded the opinion that Australia should not play Mr. Trumper, " who had seen his best days." " Mr. Trumper, sir," said an old man at the table, " is a great cricketer, though he is in bad luck just now. I should play Mr. Trumper if I knew he would not make a run." The table generally nodded approval. I understood and admired the psychology of this ; but it was a feeling which can be carried too far.

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Before I was able to meet the Englishman on his own soil, I had judged him by the Englishmen I had seen at work or at play in the outlying parts of the Empire. The result then was a conception of him as supremely capable in dominance ; rather aloof in sympathy ; disinclined to " advertise " ; physically and mentally still recognisable as kindred with the Elizabethan Englishman. After knowing the Englishman on his hearth that conception had to be revised in some respects, most of all in the last respect. The mass of the English I found less " fit " for dominance than I had imagined,

but more amiable; and their lack of "fitness" seemed chiefly a matter of environment deflecting innate character from its natural bent.

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About the æsthetic standing of the English people I had to revise some old opinions. By a comparison with their French neighbours I can best illustrate my meaning. It seems to me that it is in the practical application of æsthetic principles to life rather than in æsthetic sensibility that the French are superior to the English. What difference there is in æstheticism favours the English; there are deeper springs of art and poetry in the English than in the French. But art has been far more carefully cherished and organised in France than in England. There is more general artistic education, less true artistic feeling.

It is very risky, however, to be dogmatic on this point, for in his æsthetic outlook the Englishman is a mass of contradictions. Very often I walk through a little garden near to Charing Cross Station. It is a gem of a garden. Yet in the middle of that garden is a bronze statue of a bald-headed man with a beard and in trousers. A bald-headed man with a beard in trousers is a natural enough circumstance, and in the flesh he may be full of dignity and worth. In bronze no.

In modes of dress the French people are more decorative than the English, for the reason, I think, that their egotism is less morbid. The men have no objection to being frankly decorative in their costume. In England the working man

aims to be a drab, squalid replica of the rich man; the rich man strives to be as colourless as possible, and only the fools of the male community venture to be decorative, and, naturally enough, they are foolishly so.

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The English character on declaration of war in 1914 changed miraculously. All the dross was burned away in a night and a day. The Englishman (and, even more completely, the Englishwoman) went back to the Elizabethan standard in patriotism and the Spartan in endurance. There were a few exceptions, drawn from "society's" scum and slum dregs. But they only served to emphasise the change of a nation which had been in some elements slack and soft, into a nation of stark heroes.

The odious persons who strove to make a "show" out of the war and planned week-ends to the battle-fields, or who set to make profit out of it, or regarded it as a good means to advance their careers, were few in number. The bulk of the population were chiefly concerned with the thought of how best to help. Those who had their young lives to offer and thought they could be useful as soldiers, came forward to enlist. Those who could not serve as soldiers set themselves to be the servants and the bankers of the soldiers. Never did armies in the field have such lavish provision of food, of clothing, of pay, of comforts, such home backing.

The astonishing thing to me was that the English, suddenly disappointed of the faith they had kept in the goodwill of the Germans and thrown into

the maelstrom of war, whilst becoming coldly resolute, did not lose their good humour. I do not think there was any real "hate" of the Germans. A *Punch* cartoon showing a German family "doing their Morning Hate" was deliciously funny, not only because it was a reasonable guess at what a German family would be doing, but because quite certainly no English family was doing anything of the sort. (The best fun is when you laugh at an absurdity to which you know yourself to be superior.) Thinking over all the war pictures in England's typical satirical paper, I can remember only one that showed a lapse from a sense of good humour.

Mr. Page, who was Ambassador from the United States in England during the war years, has given his impression of the English people with such eloquence that I cannot attempt to match his eagle flight. (I should like to see every word of his honest and truthful praise read to each British child of future generations before he leaves school.) But I venture a few impressions of the people at home whom I encountered during brief intervals of leave from France.

I recall the late editor of the *Nineteenth Century and After* (Mr. Wray Skilbeck), whom I chatted with at his flat in Queen Anne's Mansions for half an hour one day during the war. He had forgotten his Review. His talk was mixed of a deferential respect for a man who was actually a combatant soldier in France and pride in the fact that he himself had been made a non-commissioned officer in one of the old men's Volunteer corps that were doing duty in London. He had learnt the mystery of "forming fours," and talked over that with

the eagerness you would expect if he had discovered a papyrus recording a new Gospel.

Then there were the distinguished people who met you at Victoria Station when you came home on leave, who looked with pity and with love at the Flanders mud on your boots and insisted on carrying your kit for you. (I had mine carried once by a very notable old man.) It was, in truth, a little trying to be served thus, but one could not protest. One day a distinguished old lady in a bus (it was "good form" to give up your motor) insisted on yielding her seat to me because I had a wound stripe. That wound had been very slight—a mere peppering with spent shrapnel bullets, one of which, however, had hit an eye and cut it slightly. So it was a hospital case in France for a few days, and naturally I had "wangled" a short leave after escaping from the doctors. But I was in the rudest of rude health and it was trying to have to take the old lady's seat. But she would have been unhappy otherwise.

When the "glasses down" movement swept over the country and it was a sign of patriotism to drink water, that made for new embarrassments. The man on leave from active service was always held exempt from the rule, and you found yourself served with wine and your host and hostess "passing."

Behind all the patriotism and good feeling of this was the fact that England was in a mood of passionate remorse that she had not prepared better for the war, felt that her soldiers were thus put at a disadvantage, and was eager to "make up for it." The motive was excellent, but I am not

sure that the mood was not over-stressed. Naturally it led in some cases to the soldier getting his ideas a little out of focus. With the exception of a small minority who dodged war service, all the people of England, men and women—those who were at home and those who had the honour of serving abroad—played the game with equal courage and steadiness and deserved an equal esteem. And it is not altogether a good thing to give too great praise to the man who is willing to give his life for his country. Why should he not? It is paying an elementary debt of honour. Socrates in his prison said the last word for all time on that.

One exasperating thing in the England at home during the war was the way in which the mass of the people accepted at their own valuation certain "leaders" who claimed to be "winning the war" by their noble efforts to keep up the courage of the nation and to prevent it plunging into revolution. Mr. Horatio Bottomley was one of these. Working from more exalted platforms, but in much the same spirit, were persons of higher position. It was a gross slander that the English people wanted the services of any exhorters to maintain their courage and their loyalty. They were in the mass, from the beginning to the end, far superior in foresight and resolution to those who professed to "lead" them, but who were, in many cases, pushing in front of them with an eye to their own ends. The steps by which the nation stripped itself of its liberties and its comforts for the winning of the war came at the prompting of the mass of the people, not at the call of any political leader. The necessary restrictions on normal life, the adoption of conscription and of

food rationing—for all these the people were ready before they were enforced, and would have welcomed at an earlier date.

As for the men of England abroad—holding the northern section of the trench line which stretched like a dreadful scar across the face of France from the sea to Switzerland—the quiet, steady courage, the patience, the good-humour of them, can never be told adequately. During the first battle of the Somme I was called out from the artillery to act as a sort of liaison officer between our Divisional Staff and the neighbouring Australian Division which had just come into the area. I saw again after many years my own countrymen —that "army of Chaliapins" as a Russian observer called them—the muscular, handsome giants of the Bush; and after a day or two knew that I was unfaithful to them, that my heart was really with the English, the London Cockneys and Yorkshire "tykes" of my own regiment. The English soldiers were so good-hearted, so jolly, so grandly simple in their heroism in comparison even with their kinsfolk of the Antipodes. Not, of course, that they were plaster saints. They had their foibles. But they were "lions in the trenches and lambs in the villages," as a Frenchwoman said to me: sublimely enduring, instinctively reasonable, utterly loyal. Their "grouses" were a necessary comic relief to prove them human. I recall one wonderful fellow, whom I had observed through a bitter night of fighting, doing every hour something worthy of a decoration, routing me out of my dug-out next morning (quite against all rules and regulations). He had on his outstretched palm a haggard-looking bit of bacon.

"Do you call that a breakfast for a man, sir?" he exclaimed.

He could grin at all the gas and shells and mud and hideous danger of the battle-field, but, treated unfairly over his breakfast bacon, he was a raging lion, and no rule or regulation or threat of being "shot at dawn" could keep him from putting his case—with exhibit—before the highest authority available.

On this point of the character of the English soldier one more yarn.

Jones was not his name, but he was Someone in France, and lead driver of No. 1 Gun "B" Battery, Thousandth Brigade. Jones had come into the New Army from a well-paid artisan's job with a clear sense as to his "rights." The sound stuff that was in him kept him from being a nuisance whilst he was in training. Until he felt that he knew his job, Jones upheld his "rights" only in regard to rations, fatigues and so on. To stand up for a good ration has been the privilege of the English soldier since the days beyond which the mind of man does not stretch. Did not Wolsey as War Minister discover that an English Expeditionary Force must have good meat and ale, and pull us through an unhappily-begun campaign on the strength of that simple discovery? But as Jones got to know his job and got to know that to a sound worker such as he was sergeant and officer allowed a good deal of rope, a vein of cantankerousness in him developed. He was noted as "a good man, but surly."

Jones took definitely the wrong turning the night at —— when his gun-team was ordered to take up ammunition. Jones had won to the

position of lead driver of the leading gun-team. In a month of service the gun-teams had not gone out to the gun positions with ammunition. He got into his stubborn Yorkshire head that it was against shop rules, or something, for a gun-team to go up with an ammunition wagon.

Of course he had to go. But he came back to the wagon line in a surly mood that was proof against coaxing, against rebuke, against punishment when surliness had led him to actual neglect of duty. The officer who acted as captain to the battery handled Jones with patience (as every essentially sound man should be handled), but it seemed to be of no avail. Jones went back steadily as a soldier. His horses fell away in condition, his harness was not smart, he became untidy a little.

This was grief to his centre driver, who may as well be called Mones to rhyme with Jones, because that was not his name, and in a story of which everything else is true the names at least must be fictitious. Mones and Jones were "townies," that is to say they knew the same picture palaces, the same football grounds, to an extent probably, the same girls, in some Yorkshire town. To have a "towney" in your battery was almost as good as to have a blood brother, and Jones, black-visaged, inclined to be surly, was the closest of pals with Mones, red-headed, cheerful. As well as being "townies" they could wear one another's boots, for Mones had the biggest feet in the British Army, except Jones's feet, which were as big.

Finally, one Saturday, at the weekly harness inspection, Jones's harness was more than dirty.

It was "set out" just as it had come back from a muddy night delivery of shell. All the other battery harness was from fair to brilliant. Jones's filthy lot was obviously a challenge.

The captain came round. Jones's display startled him.

"Is this harness display, or is it insolence?" he asked of Jones.

The question surprised Jones, who had expected a more direct attack.

"It is harness, sir."

The officer mused a moment, and spoke to the No. 1.

"Jones will be confined to the lines until this harness is thoroughly clean. He will parade it for me Sunday morning parade and every morning until it is clean."

Jones swallowed a lump, and thought of saying what he had it in his heart to say. But the officer had passed on; the opportunity was lost.

Sunday morning the harness was "as before." The officer looked at it sadly—evidently Jones was heading straight for a court-martial.

Mones, too, could see that, and in the stables he tried to remonstrate with his "towney," and he forgot for a moment one of the little fads of his horse, which was a very particular horse about his grooming. So a near hind hoof caught Mones on the cheek just under the eye, and Mones partly leaped, partly was catapulted almost ten yards to the rear, where he lay unconscious with a picturesquely bleeding cheek. The officer went up to give first aid.

Jones was making a good pretence of going on with grooming, but his eye was on his

"towney." So it was his eye that first caught the captain's.

"Here, Jones, give a hand. Hold his head up a little. No, don't try to lift him up. Just keep his head out of the mud."

Mones was apparently not seriously injured; the cheek-bone was not broken, but there was clearly a good deal of shock. When iodine was applied he groaned.

"A good sign that he feels the pain," commented the officer. "But he had better go to the hospital. Sergeant, send the cyclist orderly down to the hospital and ask for an ambulance; and send me my batman."

The officer had resolved on trying first-aid treatment for the shock, and sent his batman to his billet—a room in a farm labourer's hut near by—for a tot of whisky and a bottle of soda. The batman brought them and commented: "It is the last bottle of soda, sir." With no outward sign of his inward struggle, the officer, having given his word, had it opened, and as the gassy water sizzled up, all at once the heart of Driver Jones was changed.

Mones was soon sipping a whisky-and-soda in a dazed way and getting back to full consciousness. He rode off proudly in a motor ambulance, to return the same evening with an elegant bandage.

Going round the lines that night, after hay-up, the officer might have noticed, if he were fool enough to notice too closely, Jones working feverishly on his harness, with Mones lending him a hand. Mones was explaining that his horse did not really mean to strafe him. Jones was explaining that "he would be —— if ever he would crawl

to any —— officer just because he was a —— officer, but——"

Anyway, he was doing his harness. And there was a lot of English character about.

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Of the post-war English character it is not possible to speak surely yet. The people came out of the war as an army out of a desperate battle, wearied to the point of collapse, bled almost to exhaustion. Yet I think that if there had been sound political leadership they would have responded to a call to "consolidate" the victory. Certainly the Englishmen in the field never failed to respond to that call. However harsh had been the effort to capture a position, they had always a last ounce of effort left to dig in and put wire out if the call came.

It is said that after Trafalgar, when a storm arose to threaten our victorious but battered fleet, the sailors, after a day of fighting, went cheerfully to work all through the night to keep the ships afloat. I know that on the Somme in the summer of 1918 our soldiers would, after sixteen hours' continuous fighting, spend another four hours in going out to reap the fields of corn which were in "No Man's Land" because the French peasants wanted for food.

It would have been a difficult thing to say to the victorious English people: "Now you have won in the battle-field; but you must go at once to farm and factory and building plot and work to consolidate your victory." Only an honest, straight-speaking, trustworthy man saying it would have been regarded and obeyed. But there

were at least five million such men in England; not all with the gift of tongues, but most of them with enough speech to say that. If England in 1918 could have been put in charge of any senior public school boy or of an intelligent battle-tried sergeant out of the ranks of the Army, and the Press had played up to him, he could have done the job. The country would have been saved four years of degeneration in which the name of Englishman abroad slid down from the zenith to the nadir.

Instead the sorely-tired English were led, to use a figure of speech borrowed from "fast life," to imitate the lady who, faced by difficult circumstances, takes "the easiest way." There was a hard, high road, but an uphill one, a road of toilsome effort, of resolute economy, of casting off of feathers and flummery. How much more attractive to turn back from that road and to go cantering along the meadows where daisies grow!

It was the easiest way. Most of the leading politicians had had the idea during the war that the only way to persuade the British people to fight it out was to fill them up with sloshy nonsense about the Paradise that was to be theirs for the asking as soon as the German threw in his hand. Of course the real truth was that we were faced with the task of fighting for our very lives, and were lucky to come out with so much as shirts on our backs. I believe the British people were quite strong enough, in soul and in courage, to have faced that truth from the first, and to have acted accordingly; that they would have gone out and given Fritz his hiding for the good and sufficient reason that Fritz had to have that hiding because he had asked for it so clearly;

that they did not need to be bribed to do their duty with front stalls for an earthly paradise.

But the politicians with "first-class brains" thought differently. The things that were promised to the people of this country "when they won the war" could not have been ever delivered if all the fairy godmothers in the unseen Universe had been kept working twenty-four hours a day as common carriers. And after the war the "rosy dawn" rhetoric was the cruellest, shabbiest confidence trick ever played on a decent people—the talk of making Germany pay the whole cost of the war; the various schemes by which everybody was to work less and get more.

Whilst that was being talked at home (to the great profit of the talkers), abroad a policy of bad faith and grandiose adventure committed a nation, which had just gone down into the depths of hell to keep its word, into positions where to observe faithfully one's obligations became impossible.

The character of no nation could remain untouched by such leadership. If it can be said truthfully at the end of 1922—and I think it can—that the English character has survived with enough left of its old sturdiness, good temper and good humour to win back to safety, it is the final proof of its excellence.

CHAPTER VII

ENGLISH JOURNALISM

I DID not make a first acquaintance with English journalism in 1909. I had been a student of it then for twenty years, partly because the Australian daily newspapers sedulously imitate the English ones, partly because no Australian whose business it is to take an interest in public affairs neglects to read some London papers. The *Spectator*, *Blackwood*, the *National Review*, the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Weekly Times*, in my time, were as familiar almost in Sydney and Melbourne, Hobart and Adelaide as in English cities, and the great dailies of London were fairly well known. *Punch*, too, was widely read. I have a recollection (quaint in these days of our return to a Tudor frankness in conversation) of having a little bashfulness in explaining some fifteen years ago the meaning of the phrase "Little Mary" in a *Punch* joke to the young ladies of a squatter's household on the Monaro tableland. They had not heard of Barrie's play, and did not know what a "Little Mary" allusion in *Punch* meant.

It was only fifteen years ago, but there was at that time still a slight relish of impropriety in the story of the two little boys who were overheard to say:

"We are by ourselves; let's talk filth."

"Let's."

"Stomach!" whispered the first little scoundrel with a delicious shudder.

Nowadays—well, frankness goes further.

This is a long way of saying that the visitor from Australia to the Mother-country is usually fairly familiar with some of the English newspapers; and, if he were not, he finds nothing very different from what he was accustomed to in his own land.

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A very clear impression of the English character is to be got from English journalism; and the development of that journalism in English-speaking lands overseas gives a good indication of the degree to which that English character has the power of survival or otherwise. A writer might indeed usefully confine an analysis of English characteristics to the field of journalism, studying the English daily papers of the end of last century (which I think was the "classic" English type) and observing the close imitation of them in Australia and the modification of them in America. He would come not only to a good understanding of what are the English qualities of mind and heart, but also to some indication of the permanence of those qualities under new conditions.

The end of last century, I have ventured to say, read the "classic" type of English journalism. It was born of the early English news-letters, which were collections of gossip, and of the pamphlets, which were expressions of opinion on questions of politics, of religion or of philosophy. This classic type was then showing signs of the dwindling vitality which usually comes to a classic form of any work of art after it has been in practice

for some time. But it was an admirable reflection of the best English mind of the day. Though its comments were sober to the degree of drabness; its news sense cautious and conventional to the point of dullness, it was admirably fair and thorough in its records of Parliamentary and municipal government; of the Law Courts and of foreign events. It exhibited a decorous, serious people with but a faint interest in the scandals and accidents of life, but with a deep interest in public affairs. Indeed, it suggested a revival in modern times of the Athenian democracy, where every citizen was a law-maker and a judge.

But just as the Athenian democracy had the weakness that it was made up of a few Athenian citizens and a great number of slaves, this British democracy, as reflected by the newspaper Press of its day, was made up of, say, a quarter of a million of people who read those papers (the men who belonged, or had belonged, to one or other of the services, the men who had had a public school or a university education and the like). These quarter of a million or so of men were the readers of the daily Press and the governors of England. The rest of the population read, if they read any newspaper at all, some weekly collection of the crime and scandal of the week.

If it had been the case that at the end of last century the bulk of the adult English population had been appreciative readers of the chief London and provincial daily papers, England would clearly have shown as a highly educated democracy—a little dull and conventional in its outlook on the artistic side of life, Puritan and somewhat hypocritical in moral outlook, but very just, very sane

and very tolerant. Those papers, however, could not be presumed with certainty to reflect the minds of the people of England, but only of that small section of the people which had had a higher education. The English Press of to-day—averaging its constituent journals—represents the mass of the people far more truly.

The great change came swiftly when enterprising journalists of a new school recognised the fact that a population was growing up which had had a "Board School" education and that this population wanted daily newspapers, but did not want them of so serious a type as those then existing. The genius of Alfred Harmsworth (afterwards Lord Northcliffe) saw that the new Board School-educated readers wanted not merely a weekly but a daily paper. His *Daily Mail* sought to cater not for the first hundred thousand of the population, but for its millions. He kept to much of the old tradition of the English Press, and mixed with it the more independent news spirit that had grown up in the American Press. New York's judgment on the *Daily Mail* was that it represented "old fashioned" American journalism. The shocked judgment of the senior newspapers of England was that it foreboded the end of all things, the coming of "vulgarity" and "irresponsibility" into journalism, the setting up of the Board School rather than the University as the arbiter of public life.

The truth, as one can see now after twenty-five years of observation, was that Alfred Harmsworth had recognised a new need and—allowing for some early misadventures into sensationalism—satisfied it on the whole very well. A great deal of the old ideal of English journalism survived.

The prophecies that the "popular" Press would descend to exploit lower and lower standards of taste, or would be supplanted by papers that did, has not come to fulfilment. On the contrary, it has improved and sobered with age. The mass of the people, as they become better educated, are showing that they share very much the mentality of the old university-educated type, and are interested very strongly in the progress of their own representative institutions and in the thought of the world abroad. It is surely a very strong proof—this reaction—that the English mind in the mass (not merely the mind of the more highly educated classes) is deeply and soberly interested in the working out of the problem which faces civilisation—that of devising a system by which the mass of a people can govern their own affairs and shape their relations with their foreign neighbours without succumbing either to the bribes of the venal or the follies of the incompetent.

Taking it that the "classic" type of English journal made that great problem its chief interest, the English Press, I think, shows the tendency to come back true to that type and thus prove the permanence of the English character as it is reflected in the Press.

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The proof is reinforced by the close imitation in Australia—which was not colonised in the main by emigrants of the upper classes—of the "classic" type of English journalism. The Australian Press, from the first, copied very exactly the English Press, and the Australian paper of to-day is far closer to the English paper of twenty-five years

ago than is the average London paper of to-day. It gives steady attention to the working of its representative institutions and persists in taking a world outlook and not merely a local outlook. There is something a little ridiculous, perhaps (but also, to my mind, something admirable), in the editor of some small Australian country paper solemnly printing leading articles on the European position. As editor, years ago, of a provincial daily paper in Australia, I have often written articles discussing Russia's policy, or Lord Salisbury's attitude to Turkey and such like subjects. I did this because I knew my readers would be interested, and that they expected it. It is the English spirit reproducing itself in the Antipodes.

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If the Press of the American continent is studied, there will be found clear indications in it that the great new nation of the world is showing a tendency to think in English as well as to speak and to write in English. At first America's journalism departed very far from the English model. Living under Republican institutions, under a much more fluid social system and without the centralised system of government which prevailed in England, the American journalist was without most of the charts which guided the English journalist. He had to find a new sense of newspaper values, because his newly-organised nation, facing purely domestic problems, was not interested in the same kind of things as was the English population. He judged that it was not even interested in its own system of government nor the administration of its own

laws, and gave relatively little attention to the debates of Congress, the working of municipal institutions, the sessions of the Law Courts, except when these had a scandalous interest. The political affairs of the outside world were almost wholly neglected.

This American journalism set itself chiefly to chronicle the abnormal in American and, to a lesser extent, in foreign life. In an English newspaper, a duke opening a county institute and saying the appropriate things for the occasion, would be "news." In an American paper, only a duke coming to a public dinner in yellow and blue pyjamas would attract attention. A great American editor defined very well this governing principle of the original American newspaper in trying to explain to a "cub" reporter what was news: "If," he said, "this afternoon on Broadway a dog bites a man, that's not news, but if a man bites a dog, that *is* news."

But American journalism is changing, and is changing towards the "classic" English type in the sense that it is beginning to take a close interest in the administration of American affairs and in the development of world politics. It would be impossible to say to-day, as it was possible to say about ten years ago, that the essential basis of New York journalism is that New York is eagerly, pettily, provincially interested in New York, and very little interested in anything else. Then the New York public had to be given, piping hot, a record of New York life, and a record of certain happenings outside of New York which showed either (*a*) that the foreigners of Boston, New Orleans, Canada and Europe could, under

some circumstances, act curiously like New Yorkers, or (*b*) that the said foreigners could, under some circumstances, act so barbarously unlike New Yorkers as to be amusing. New York was not in the least interested in European politics, and very little in American politics. It was not interested in great social developments and tendencies. It wanted the blood and ballet of life from all over the world, but most particularly the blood and ballet of New York—the sensational murders, the intimate records of the queens of the stage. Now American journalism has moved further towards English journalism than London journalism has moved towards it.

This generation will see the English-speaking world with an English-written Press which will have its main characteristics in common. There will be many variations in expression, in methods of presentation of news; but there will be the same general governing principle, that the most interesting thing in life is the discussion of how to live together sensibly and peaceably and intelligently, and that the journalist's task is to contribute the best share of good-will and of clear thought that he can command to the problem.

Now the point is that that kind of journalism is a product of the English mind. It was born in London, and from London spread over the British Isles to the British Dominions; and, being transplanted to the United States and at first undergoing a revolutionary transformation there, it is coming back to the English type.

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When I came to England in 1909 the halfpenny Press had almost completed its revolution in London. *The Times*, the *Morning Post* and the *Daily Telegraph* were the only surviving fortresses of the older fashion, and they were beginning to think of making concessions to new circumstances. In 1922 there is no example surviving of the typical daily of 1900 in London (though there are some in the provinces). But the changes have been largely in form not in spirit. They have left the essentials of English journalism unchanged; and the daily Press of England to-day, taken in the aggregate, does represent the mind of the people of England, not merely the upper classes of England.

The degree of reticence of most London newspapers seems to me admirable. Few of them descend to spicing their columns with scandal—apart from the law reports (which perhaps give quite enough of it); and when public policy suggests the wisdom of silence (in matters of Defence and Foreign Affairs, for example), silence is generally observed.

There is, of course, in England and elsewhere the dangerous tendency for newspapers to become purely business speculations owned by joint stock companies, organised only to make the highest possible dividends on the capital invested. In England the newspapers of to-day are usually of a high character largely because the old tradition of a newspaper as an organ of opinion rather than a means of profit has still a strong hold. There is scarcely a great newspaper the conduct of which is not identified definitely with some personage, who is made to feel that he has embarked

his honour as well as his capital in the enterprise. That is a wholesome check. The dangerous newspaper of the future will be that one controlled by a Board of directors unknown to the general public, with no check on their actions of the desire for good repute; possibly with great financial interests outside their shares in the newspaper, to promote which they use its columns. Dangerous because news is as much a necessity to civilised man as bread. So the newspaper must be read—the daily newspaper, partly made up of news, partly of comment, and depending for its existence on the advertising support it gets. This type of newspaper, when it comes to be a company-owned affair, may develop into a purely commercial and money-making institution. Few men who invest in the stock of a public company consider that they have embarked their honour with their allotment fee, and the journal owned and controlled by a joint stock company loses the restraint of individual ownership. If it is blessed with directors who take a proper view of their responsibilities, not merely as dividend-seekers, but as leaders of public opinion, well and good. But if directors come who study only dividends, the dividends from the paper and the dividends from their other enterprises, then the joint-stock newspaper is owned by a tradesman without even the check of having his name up over the door. He may sell light-weight news, adulterated news, or plain lies, may withhold what should go to the public, and not have to face even the ignominy of personal association with his misdeeds. Absolutely his only check is the maxim that "honesty is the best policy." And is it always?

In 1909 the most vivid personality in English journalism was Lord Northcliffe. He had the first faculty of leadership; he thought and decided quickly. That I found at our first meeting. It was at the opening session of the Imperial Press Conference in 1909.

For Press cable communications with Australia the rate then was excessively high, and all the Australian daily papers were combined to conduct a single service from the Home Country to Australia and New Zealand. That I thought to be mischievous; some of my Australian friends disagreed with me very strongly. I had determined to bring up this question at the Imperial Press Conference—I was a member, but not an Australian delegate—and to point out that it was the excessively high rate which made the monopoly possible. When I got up to speak one of the Australian delegation sought to silence me on "a point of order." He said that I described myself as an Australian, but "was not known in Australia." That was, well, a political debating point.

The Marquess of Crewe was in the chair, and I judged that he had a share of the English habit (a weakness in some circumstances, a strength in others) of solving an awkward point by a compromise. So I protested that I only wished to speak for two minutes. He looked relieved, and allowed the two minutes. Here was a wild colonial wanting to talk and another colonial asking that he should not be allowed to talk. But, after all, two minutes was a trifle. The question of whether I had any right to speak at all since I was only a member and not a delegate (and that was really the essential point) lapsed.

Two minutes were quite sufficient for what I had to say. I sat down, and at once Lord Northcliffe crossed over to my side.

"Why on earth did you not let me know you were in London?"

One is flattered, even when not deceived, by the affable pretence of a great personage that he really knows and cares for you. I had no claim to let Lord Northcliffe know I was in London. Years before, at the request of Mr. Deakin (then Prime Minister of Australia) I had sent to the *Daily Mail* a short series of articles defending Australian policy against the attacks being made on it in that paper. The articles, which as politely as possible argued that the *Daily Mail* either misunderstood or falsified the facts, were given great prominence, and were duly paid for. But I was sure that the incident had been forgotten in 1909. I was also sure that Lord Northcliffe had come to the conclusion, by a bit of very quick thinking, that I had got the right end of a useful stick in a quarrel worth while. He went on:

"I see you know all about this. Tell me, what ought we to do?"

"They are proposing a committee to discuss cable rates. I think the committee is so constituted as to burke the issue."

"H'm."

"The thing to do is to see that some independent English journalists are added to the committee. It is an Imperial matter, of interest to the Mother-country, as well as the Dominions."

"Right. Get up and propose it."

"You do it. The chairman won't put up with me again."

"I'll get someone."

It was done. Lord Northcliffe afterwards collected a group of prominent British journalists, and at luncheon the question was thrashed out. What seemed to me to be rather like magic was that in the few seconds I was speaking he had recognised that here was something worth while for him to bother about.

Subsequently I saw much of Lord Northcliffe. He was strong in judgment, in decision and in courage. There was a certain amount of sub-malicious mockery of him as fancying in himself a resemblance of Napoleon. But he had Napoleon's characteristics—audacity, ruthlessness, magnetism and a genius for making the most of people. In minor repects, too, there were resemblances. He was "good *bourgeois*" at heart, intensely devoted to wife and mother and his brothers. He was very sentimental, and therefore could be cruel, but did not like to see the sufferings of those to whom he had to be cruel.

At this time he was interesting himself in the acclimatisation of the Canadian robin to England. The Canadian robin, which is almost as big as a barn-door fowl, has the largest breast circulation of any robin in the world; hence, perhaps, the interest. For the benefit of the Canadian robin, plentiful food was spread out in the glades of Sutton. But the English sparrow, which has no reverence for anything, used to eat up the cakes provided for the Canadian robin. So nets were spread for the robber sparrows.

One afternoon at Sutton a gardener came carefully in sight with a batch of captured sparrows and proceeded to wring their necks as proof of his

zeal. The great man shuddered, almost fainted, and drove the executioner away. He could not endure the sight of those little larrikins of the bird world suffering. (Marc Antony was humbugging the Roman mob delightfully when he claimed that Cæsar's tears over the poor were proof that he was not of the stern stuff of which ambitious men are made.)

Lord Northcliffe had one attribute which probably would have prevented him planning any Napoleonic *coup d'état* — a sense of humour. Probably that stops many an Englishman on the path to dramatic greatness. Lord Allenby, if he had chosen to ride through the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, might have figured before the Moslem world as the new Prophet, greater than Mohammed, who is to come, some day, from Allah. But he probably summed it up in his own mind that "he couldn't be so —— a fool." And he will end his days in Chester Square or as the squire of a little country seat.

Let the birds illustrate also Lord Northcliffe's sense of humour. He noted, I think, a glint of mockery in my eye about his Canadian robins.

"You think," he said, "I would be more legitimately interested in *canards*."

With humour to laugh at himself on occasion, he had a great sense of fun and a keen desire to laugh at other people (which is no obstacle at all in the ambitious man's path once a certain elevation is reached). His perception of human nature was very clear and a little cynical.

I saw Lord Northcliffe for the last time during the second year of the war when I was on leave from France. He was full of concern for what he spoke of as "the awful muddle." He showed no

signs then of any illness or failing. Almost his last remark was, "I am glad I did a little to back up 'Bobs' on National Service." He had given big and unselfish help to Lord Roberts.

A true estimate of Lord Northcliffe is yet difficult, partly because of some of the weaknesses of his last years. But I think the future will think of him as a wonderful man, of superhuman energy, who was something more than a merely business man. If the revolution—it was that—in English journalism which so enormously enlarged the public of the daily Press had been under other leadership than that of Lord Northcliffe, it would probably not have kept so much of the old good character of English journalism. He was a patriot; he had imagination; he cared for money, but not exclusively; and he was sensitive to old-fashioned English public opinion.

On this point, an illustration. He had asked me to do a short series of articles for the *Daily Mail*, giving my impressions as a new-comer. Having had the "copy" for some days he made a somewhat embarrassed explanation.

"None of my people," he said, "seem to like your stuff."

I regretted, and suggested the return of the MSS. He finally decided to "chance it" and publish. That week the *Spectator* said something very appreciative of my "Impressions of England." Lord Northcliffe sent me a triumphant letter. "*We* were right," he said. "If the *Spectator* thinks a thing is good, it is good in the eyes of the best class of Englishmen. The *Spectator* is the voice of the rectory and of the country squires."

But he would not allow anything good to the

Morning Post (which had much the same character) though he had a great admiration for its proprietress, Lady Bathurst. A sense of business rivalry prevented. The *Morning Post* was regarded as a serious rival to *The Times*, of which Lord Northcliffe had just acquired control.

Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey, of the *Spectator*, had a kindly eye for this Australian critic. From opposite ends of the earth we had pleaded very much the same causes for many years, and had, as a bond of union, a common faith that the British Empire, with all its faults, was the best thing humanity had evolved yet in the way of national organisation and the best hope for the future. Mr. Strachey is of the evangelist type of editor, and gives up much of his time to encouraging in every part of the Empire likely recruits to his "mission."

Of the same evangelist type at heart, in spite of surface differences, is Mr. Leo Maxse, editor of the *National Review*—a Savonarola spirit: preaching fiercely before the war against the vanity of the mandarins of political life and their faith in German goodwill; as gentle and courteous in private as he was stern and relentless in public affairs. It was natural enough that, when he was the disregarded prophet of an unpleasant future, he should have trod a stony path. But, afterwards, when all he had been saying and writing for so many years proved true, why were no roses spread in his path? It would have been reasonable if the first thing that post-war England had decided upon was a statue to Maxse.

Yet another journalist evangelist whom I met in 1909 was Mr. Massingham, High Priest of Philosophic Radicalism and editor of the *Nation*.

Between his views and my views, then and since, there has been hardly one point of contact. But of his absolute honesty and disinterestedness there could be no question. Probably, too, he is a wholesome influence in Empire politics—like the statue of Osiris carried round at Egyptian banquets to warn the guests to beware of the vanity of human pride.

It was my advantage in being a stranger (and therefore *déclassé* politically) that I could meet representatives of all schools of journalism. I was convinced that the English people had in their journalists a body of very able and conscientious servants and treated them, on the whole, very poorly when they were merely philosophers and artists, though the business side of newspaper organisation was rewarded, and honoured, magnificently.

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The war has made no great changes in English journalism except that it has smudged out the sharp lines of party political division. Before the war at a general election every paper had to have a party and flaunt its colours very boldly. That has changed (though in the electorate there seems a tendency to go back to sharp lines of party division).

The "insurance" ventures of some of the London papers may have a bad effect. The logical conclusion of the insurance policy would be the publication of a daily paper rigidly restricted in regard to size, employing no expensive staff, but giving a bare record of the sporting news, the murders, divorces and other popular

events of the day, and devoting as great a proportion as possible of its revenue towards insurance payments. There is no business reason why a newspaper which gave in the cheapest possible form the chief news of the day, and at the same time offered its readers double or treble the benefits of the existing schemes, should not prove a commercially profitable proposition. Indeed, it might take the comedy touch out of one newspaper insurance which offers you £10 if you indulge in the luxury of an operation for appendicitis, and promise you the whole cost of the operation. There is the other alternative, that the whole insurance business will be dropped and the papers will go back to their normal function of informing their readers. As a practising journalist naturally I hope for this, and as an optimist, I expect it.

CHAPTER VIII

ENGLISH POLITICS

In the spring of 1909, coming to England from Australia I have to confess to " a raw and excited state of mind " when viewing British politics (the definition is quoted from the contemporary remonstrance of an English politician of note). The German Powers had just been disclosed suddenly, and as it were by a kindly lightning flash, poised for their attack on the world's humane civilisation and its chief bulwark, the British Empire. The Austrian stride down towards Salonika by the treaty-breaking annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the disclosure of the German naval programme happened to come together as if unmistakably to show not only the imminent menace, but the two alternative routes of attack; either a direct blow at British sea power, if that seemed promising, or the opening of the " Middle Europe " corridor from Germany to the Persian Gulf, which would strike under the guard of British sea power.

For anybody with eyes it seemed impossible not to see. In Australia where the politicians—with a few honourable exceptions, among whom were Mr. J. C. Watson and Mr. W. M. Hughes, both then Labour leaders—had been until then pottering and postponing in the usual political way on the question of national defence, the people at

once saw clearly, and universal training for military service and the beginning of an Australian navy came. But in the Mother Country it did not seem to be recognised that the Empire was on the eve of a great struggle for existence ; and an Australian, who did not nurture the delusion that the big show could be saved by getting ready at the little outpost in the South Seas, naturally felt " raw and excited " when confronted by the highly superior attitude of some of the British politicians who were absorbed in " social reform " and in Irish Home Rule, and did not want to be bothered with questions of national defence.

In the Home Country generations of peace and rich security, it seemed to me, had created a fog of kindliness which confounded good and evil, holding that the one was really not so admirable nor the other really so detestable as common people thought. To be suspicious of zeal for your friends and to cultivate kindliness to your enemies were the marks of one British school of politicians. An honest hostility was something to be shuddered at (unless your fellow citizen was the object), an honest fervour of national pride something suspect. Yet, curious fact, among these politicians and their Press supporters, the gospel of tolerance and kindliness to one's national enemies was often preached and practised with grave intolerance towards one's fellow nationals.

But the evil in the politicians' mind was not growing without root in the people's mind. There was a national craze for tolerance backing up the political attitude of weariness of Imperial responsibility. I recall, after speaking at Kensington Town Hall, November, 1909, when I pointed

out the inevitableness of a German challenge to our Empire, that one of the audience came to me at the end of the meeting, seriously perturbed, and wishing to know "if there were not some territory we could give up to Germany and so satisfy her, and avoid this dreadful struggle." Surprised at this late survival of an idea of national defence which surely was sufficiently discredited in the days when Rome tried to buy off the Gauls with gold, I could only answer that I knew at least one part of the Empire which could not be given up to Germany without an exterminating war. But the incident (there were more of the same kind) showed evils growing up in the national mind, not universally, not generally even, but rankly enough.

My Kensington friend was of the well-to-do class, and probably "voted Unionist," and should have been sound on defence questions. The Labour people, I was told in many quarters, were quite unsound, and so long as inquiry went no farther than that type of Labour leader who knows himself as an "intellectual," and toils not except to spin words, it was true enough. But of the mass of the manual workers it was not true. Their national clear-sightedness was often obscured by the smoke barrages of the politicians. But it was there. How sound at heart the Labour population was surprised me, seeing the conditions in which they lived in the great industrial quarters, divorced from most of the manly joys and arts of life; no chance to learn to hunt and to cook food, to master horses and boats, to make shelter from the weather; with no spell of military training to give them bodily and mental firmness, and to teach

them the reciprocity between rights and duties ; with not even gymnasia and decently convivial public-houses to combat physical and mental slackness.

At the end of 1909 there seemed a gleam of hope. After having heard in public meeting or in private conversation the views of most of the chief politicians, after having spoken to many meetings from Plymouth to Middlesbrough, and after some six months of a general inquiry into public opinion, the conclusion I came to was that an adequate preparation to meet the German menace could be expected. I thought that the Mother-country would move deliberately, but that she would move. The people, generally speaking, had not in any class come to a knowledge of the urgency of the danger. A few had, and were making gallant efforts to arouse others. There was needed a general call from the political leaders. That call, it seemed, might be hoped for.

There were some signs of it. During 1909 two Imperial Conferences had been held in London, the Imperial Press Conference and an Imperial Defence Conference, the one public, the other private. The speeches of British leaders to the first (either directly to the Conference or to public meetings at the time) took, with one exception, a note of sober concern. Speakers included men of all parties, and Lord Rosebery, who was his own party. The only man of any note who "guyed" the defence call was Mr. Winston Churchill, who, speaking to the Press Conference on "The Press in Relation to Literature," opened with a laborious sneer at the "alarmists" of the time.

The statements made to the Defence Conference may not be discussed fully; but they pushed farther than the public utterances of the time the note of warning. The impression carried away from that Defence Conference by some at least of its members was that of the necessity of getting armour ready promptly and of keeping good watch. In Australia and New Zealand there was a response in much greater naval votes and in the pushing on with compulsory universal training for military service. At the end of 1909 no one in authority in Great Britain could profess to be ignorant of the position. All that was lacking in regard to the knowledge of the coming German war was its date. Announcement of a programme of preparation from the Home Government was daily expected.

The General Election of 1909–10 intervened. The Government went to the country with the "People's Budget" as its battle-cry. It had then a good working majority, quite irrespective of the Irish Party. As a result of the elections the Government lost so many English seats that it was left dependent on the Irish Party for support. No result could have been more disastrous to defence interests. There were two alternative solutions of the political situation then—the formation of a Coalition Government between the two British parties or the continuance of the Liberal Government in office with the Irish Party in power. The first plan was proposed in some quarters but was not adopted. The second alternative held the field. Thereafter, with more and more stubbornness each month, the British Government set its teeth in denial of any danger from

Germany, in confounding of any plea for adequate defence preparation.

The political leaders on the Liberal side, who in 1909 recognised that the German threat was a real one, during 1910–14 came to believe that they had been mistaken, to believe so firmly that they had been mistaken that nothing could bring them back to the old attitude of precaution, not even when a little before the outbreak of the war Germany imposed a special levy on capital and organised her old men and women for agricultural service in time of war.

The party-politics craze in Great Britain was of such strength that its victims were capable of any degree of blind folly. Some political leaders on the Unionist side who in 1909 talked of Defence as the paramount issue, were—under the spell of that craze—content in the subsequent years to give it a distinctly second place and to cold-shoulder the campaign for National Service.

I have two clear political recollections of 1910. One was the statement to me of an influential politician of the Liberal " machine " that it would be a splendid thing if only the Tories would take up compulsory military service officially. " ' No conscription ' would be better than the ' dear food ' cry, and would keep us in office for a generation." I objected that Lord Roberts did not propose conscription. " What is the use of arguing about that ? " he retorted with genial cynicism. " It would be conscription on the hoardings." The other was the apology of a Unionist M.P. for refusing to appear on a National Service League platform. " I believe in it," he said pathetically,

"but I must not compromise my party." Both the men I quote were otherwise respectable, and probably would have resented any proposal that they should act as fraudulent trustees in a commercial matter.

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It is but fair to interpolate that there are other countries than England in which the politician is an evil, for it is too often the necessity of political livelihood to use words wrongly, which "is not only a fault in itself, it also creates evil in the soul." But in England, in the years before the war, it seemed to me that the political system generally was particularly dangerous to the national well-being, and this partly because of its past virtue. For one thing, political leaders were far more trusted than in other countries, and so had more power for evil. For another thing, the political party machines were organised to a greater strength than in any other country except the United States.

The party system had allowed to grow up a system of party funds, which was logically inconsistent with political virtue, but which was in practice at first not actively vicious, and was, therefore, tolerated, by one of those moral compromises which are characteristic of the English people. The party funds, springing from the gratitude, prospective or retrospective, of the socially ambitious as well as from the political enthusiasm of unselfish supporters are really indefensible. But a political system which regarded politics somewhat in the light of a sport, was tolerant of this as of the "poultry fund" of a

hunt: and the tolerance was not at first greatly abused. In time it, however, had its inevitable evils, working to introduce into politics men who had little or no worth, but whose passport was a large contribution to the treasury of the party, and to keep out of politics men of ability and enthusiasm who had not money as well as time and energy to devote to public life.

But, in addition to this, the party funds had a great influence in subordinating questions of principle and emphasising questions of party discipline. Endow any corporation generously and it comes to have a life of its own, apart from its founders and members. If one thousand persons meet together and form a political association, which remains poor, struggling year by year to pay its barely necessary expenses, it will remain the prompt servant of their wishes. If they endow that association with great funds, if they give to its officials sources of income apart from levies on the members, it will become to an extent their master. The association will begin to initiate and to veto policies, will begin, more or less consciously, to find its decisions largely shaped by a regard for the funds. It is as difficult to get pure politics from party organisations with great funds—or the hope of great funds, or the memory of great funds—as to get pure sport from some professional football club, organised as a joint stock company to make profits.

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Whilst in 1909, in face of the great danger then clearly disclosed, the British ruling politicians seemed willing to consider defence seriously, in

1910, after a General Election, which put the Irish Party in power and gave party controversies a fresh stimulus, that willingness vanished, the Government attitude set more and more steadily to the theory that anyone who spoke seriously of defence was a wicked alarmist. Nothing happened in Europe that could be interpreted as trending to peace; indeed, the war warnings accumulated. But the politicians in power (aided and abetted to a great extent by the indifference or by the party spirit of most of the politicians out of power) cried "peace" more and more vociferously each month as they committed the nation to fresh domestic entanglements and dissensions. Is it to be wondered at that Germany calculated confidently that, when the war came, Great Britain would be helpless, absorbed completely in the task of pulling down the national fabric so that every man might be made happy with a half-brick?

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An incident of the unpublished history of that time. The sailors and soliders could not, with rare exceptions, share the blindness of the politicians, and discussions of the coming peril among them were inevitable. An Imperial official, who communicated to his Government overseas—as it was his clear duty to do—a gravely alarming fact which had come up at one of these discussions, was censured for doing so. The politicians in power insisted that sailors and soldiers should follow the ostrich policy. The domestic politics of Great Britain were based on the presumption that there was no foreign danger, and it was "disloyalty" to

suggest otherwise. Even the naval agreement which the Dominions in the South Pacific had made with the Mother Country was not kept. It was first ignored, and then repudiated by Mr. Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty. This did not prejudice the creation of the Australian Fleet, for the Australian Government, with a wise foresight, had refused to make its construction contingent on a subsidy from the British Government; but it was a grave affront to New Zealand, which had paid to the Imperial Treasury a subsidy based on a promise which was broken.

Further evidence of the dislike of the then British Government towards any enthusiasm for defence preparation was that the Government's Press organs (and one of the guerrilla political organisations supporting the Government) were allowed to campaign against the system of universal training for military service just instituted in Australia and New Zealand. The "conscientious objector" in those Dominions had been treated with a just tolerance; if a man objected to shedding blood in defence of his country he could go into the Ambulance Service and train to staunch blood in defence of his country. Nothing could be fairer. But he was encouraged with money, with pamphlets, and with Press support from one set of politicians in England to carry his objection to the point of seditious resistance to the law. It was inconvenient that whilst the people at home were being assured that there was no German menace, British people abroad should be preparing to meet that menace.

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When, it being clear that the Party in power would never consent to a training of the manhood of the country for its defence, the appeal was made to them at least to get in a stock of guns and rifles, and to make our munition factories independent of any foreign supplies, that also was refused.

So we were let in for 1914 and those agonising months when it seemed that the German attack would succeed in destroying civilisation, because Great Britain, with most of her manhood eager to serve, could not train and arm quickly enough.

It is impossible to speak of the English political system with any patience when one thinks that it was so largely responsible for the long-drawn-out agony of the Great War. I recognise that what was largely the explanation was a motive of good-temper and tolerance and of genuine belief in the good-temper and tolerance of other people. Another mitigating explanation was the habit of the people to look upon politics in the same sense as they looked upon cricket or football. It was a game and you must play for your side. The issues were not so important as was team loyalty. Put up a good game; be loyal to your side; and it does not matter much who wins. It is well enough for a nation to make a sport of its politics in times of security; but cricket on the edge of a precipice!

In part, too, I suppose British pre-war politics were partly explainable as the stage of a reaction from the dullness of the politics of the previous era when the word "brilliant" was rather synonymous with unreliable. The popular newspaper, designed to satisfy the mental needs of people with a Board School education, had made the opening for the

"brilliant" politician—the man with a limelight and Limehouse way with him, the man of the eloquent peroration, and the genuine punch in invective, who could be constantly in the paragraphs and had no dull routine ideas in regard to policy, but a facile emotionalism tinged with religiosity with which to sway crowds.

Perhaps, in the course of generations, human culture will breed the perfect politician. He will be a dull, plain man of simple truthfulness and straightforward purpose ordinarily, but—like the drake which assumes resplendent nuptial plumage at a certain season—he will, when the occasion comes to woo the constituencies, have a momentary outbreak of brilliance. He will be able to court the people as a Lothario, then doff his fine plumes to serve them afterwards as a faithful steward, careful alike of promises and pence.

But if, as is probable, Nature refuses to be so accommodating, perhaps man in his capacity of a democratic animal will educate himself into keeping the tournament elements of his politics within bounds. (He will always insist on having *some* of the tournament element, for man is a playing, sport-loving animal.) The problem is to prevent the brilliant performers of the tourney from interfering too seriously with the practical business of government. A plain, straightforward man in times of difficulty, a brilliant man in times of prosperity—that should be the ideal.

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The war over, the British Empire has serious times ahead. The great issue, which all the civilised world must soon face through the re-

adjustment of the social (and possibly also of the racial) balance, is complicated for Great Britain, by the fact that she possesses so much of the earth. There was much talk before the war of "places in the sun." Soon there must be a far more weighty and dangerous clamour for "places at the table," for the right to share in the food lands of the earth. Populations begin to press against their boundaries. Modern science has helped the race of man to reach numbers once considered impossible. Machinery, preventive medicine, surgery, sanitation, all have helped to this. The feeding of these increasing numbers comes with each year a more difficult problem. Territories do not stretch with populations. Even the comparatively new nation in the United States finds its food supply and raw material supply tightening. The British Empire, and the British Empire almost alone, has territory and resources to relieve for the present the scarcity which makes food dear, and to provide for as many centuries ahead as it is possible to foresee.

A "production" map of the world would show that the British Empire within its boundary can produce all the food articles needed for the comfort and luxury of man, and that it occupies in this regard a uniquely favourably position. Absolutely self-sufficient itself, it is a necessary source of supply to many other nations. It appears natural enough to the English mind that we should thus own so much of the earth. To the foreigner, the position probably does not appear to be so well ordained. That is why it seems to me certain that the British Empire, in addition to the "teething troubles" incidental to the growing up of a new social order,

will have special troubles of her own, due to the "envy of less happy lands."

The defensive and constructive problems facing British statesmanship are thus exceptionally grave. They cannot be met with the levity and childish quarrelling which marked England before 1914.

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I am aware that in writing thus, I shall come under party suspicion. It is one of the characteristics of British politics that when any opinion at all is expressed on a political or even an economic matter, there is keen inquiry made as to what party it can be best identified with, and promptly the other party curses it with bell, book and candle. But it is really a non-party expression of opinion, for I do not care a snap of the fingers for any British party excepting in so far as it seems to stand for the better security of the Empire and the peace of the world. I do not want to see the British Isles brought down to an importance fitting to their geographical size.

And all these harsh things having been said about the British political organisation, the saving truth has to be admitted, that the men who work in and with the system are often superior to the system. Otherwise there would have been graver evils even than the slothful easy-going which caused the inadequate preparation for 1914, and the dismal years of waste, incompetence and insincerity which followed the Armistice. Let me in three succeeding chapters give impressions of three men in English public life (who are typical of many others) who give reason to hope for the happy result, when, in the affairs of our race, Fate insists

on casting an inexorable balance—as Fate at some time or other always does. She may march with limping feet, but in time she comes, and then two and two make four, and the fraction over or less—however vulgar—has to pass to strict reckoning. No persuasiveness can postpone, no artfulness conceal the issue then; only clear, blunt honesty and rigid purpose can serve.

CHAPTER IX

THE ENGLISH SCHOOLBOY SENSE OF FAIR PLAY

"A POLITICAL career," an English cynic has said, "either finds or leaves a man a degraded character." There is enough truth in the sneer to make the average politician an unfair measuring rod of national character in any country. But there are exceptions, and the English people could win no more favourable verdict than if they were judged from one of their number who has been a politician for nearly forty years—Edward Grey. Not always agreeing with him in the details of politics, often impatient because of his extreme patience with an enemy, yet for many years I have turned to the thought of him when the English political prospect was very bleak and desolate, with the comforting thought that the English people could still find great and truthful men for their public life.

In 1919, on the eve of his departure on a mission to the United States, he broke what had been his rule and talked to me (and gave me permission to publish what he said) of the motives of his public policy. The reason for the exception he made was, I think, a book I had written on Problems of the Pacific (1912), in which I had pleaded for Anglo-American co-operation in world affairs. It was his view that a mutual searching for peace by Great Britain and the United States is the best hope of the post-war world.

Edward Grey, son of a soldier, grandson of a statesman, educated at Winchester and Balliol, in boyhood showed a bent towards the contemplative life and the open-air life. He was fond of poetry and of fishing. Neither taste suggests the stern stuff of which ambition is made. Of his love for dry fly fishing there is public confession in a book which for clear, sweet English, is worthy of the good company of Isaak Walton. His love for poetry is more of a secret. But it is a real force in his life.

Winchester—which was once proclaimed by a British statesman as "indubitably the best public school in England, for the men who have been to Eton, to Harrow and to Rugby always give it the second place after their own school"—has sent some great men into British public life, but it is not exactly the school to make a lad a "careerist." Balliol has more an atmosphere of politics, successful politics. "He was one of Nature's Balliolmen" was the witty summing up, in an Oxford Union debate, of a successful politician, who is almost the complete antithesis of Lord Grey. But Balliol gave the future Foreign Secretary no taste for statecraft. Except for a happy accident, he would probably have justified the verdict of Gladstone: "There is Edward Grey, who could do anything, be anything, but prefers to go fishing." He would have gone through life as a country gentleman, finding scope for his interest in mankind in the affairs of his neighbourhood, carrying out with conscientious industry those tasks of local administration which the English polity keeps for men of leisure so that they may be linked up in some way with public life and reminded of duty to

the community. He would have been Justice of the Peace certainly, probably churchwarden, possibly member of some local government Boards or Councils. His passion for angling—if passion is a word that can be applied to that sport—his love for bird life and his library would have filled the rest of life. He had no liking for travel. The life of cities did not interest him. The wild Northumberland moors swept by keen air, peopled by shepherds and farmers of sturdy manliness, were his taste.

But the happy accident came. The reform of the franchise was stirring English minds when Edward Grey was growing up to manhood. In 1867 the franchise had been widely extended, but this extension, whilst giving the vote to city workers of the same class, excluded the country labourer. That caused a deep and just resentment. If merit and intelligence were to be considered in the granting of the franchise, this extension excluded a better class than it included. When Edward Grey came down from Oxford in 1884 Gladstone had proposed to remedy the anomaly. The Conservative Party objected. Demonstrations were organised in the country to support Gladstone's proposal. Near Edward Grey's home in August, 1884, one of these demonstrations was held. He was asked to take the chair, consented, and thenceforth his feet were set on the path which was to bring him to be the keeper of the British conscience during the years of fate which ushered in the Great War.

In Edward Grey's public life it seems to me he has been guided always by the one principle—the simple schoolboy sense of fair play that he brought

away from (and without a doubt carried to) Winchester. "Ordinary schoolboy fairness" in conversation with his friends, he insists upon as an adequate rule of public and private life. He will permit no sophistication of it. That sense of fairness made him consent to be chairman of a Northumberland meeting to insist that his friends and neighbours, those shepherds and agricultural workers whose rugged commonsense and fine character he knew, should not be kept out of a share of the government of the country. It was not fair, and, for what his voice was worth, it would be raised in protest. In just such spirit, on a greater occasion, John Hampden broke out of his seclusion as country gentleman to become a man of State.

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England having thus caught up Grey in the mesh of political life, refused to let him go. There was work for him to do which no other man could do as well, work in which just an "ordinary schoolboy sense of fairness" was to be pitted successfully against a most unscrupulous and relentless diplomacy, counting for its success on the deep dejection and disillusionment which seemed to atrophy Great Britain as a nation in 1914. The franchise agitation of 1884 was successful. Those Northumberland shepherds, and their peers throughout the country, won the vote, and a General Election was held on the new franchise. The Northumberland men resolved to have Edward Grey as their member. He was returned to the House of Commons in 1885 and represented the same constituency—

Berwick-on-Tweed—until he went to the House of Lords.

As a member of the House of Commons Sir Edward Grey—he had succeeded his grandfather to a baronetcy in 1882—was not often heard in debate. But his voice and his vote were always on the same side. He had a real trust in the people. He had a logical conviction that every step towards fuller popular government was a good step. As he put it in answer to a question from me as to whether he thought that Popular Government was always wise government: "That isn't worth considering. The fact has to be faced that Popular Government is the only possible government. To the pessimist who speaks of its dangers I say, 'At any rate you must make the best of it, for it is and must be.' But personally I am convinced it is the best form of government. You may have under it abuses, mistakes. But on the whole it is preferable to any other form of government. Its abuses and mistakes are least likely to be carried to extremes. It is founded on the sense of justice. It gives a fair basis at the start to public policy."

In 1892 Sir Edward Grey first took office as Parliamentary Secretary to the Foreign Office in the Gladstone (which afterwards became the Rosebery) administration. When Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman became Prime Minister in 1905 he invited Sir Edward Grey to be Foreign Secretary and, after some reluctance, he consented. That office he held (latterly under Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister) until 1916. In domestic policy the Cabinet of 1905 was Liberal, with little surviving of the old Whiggism and a tendency towards the

new Radicalism. In foreign policy it was above all things pacific. It was against any warlike adventure. Its spirit was not only against any expansion of British responsibilities, but in favour of any " drawing in " that seemed compatible with honour and with safety.

Sir Edward Grey brought to the Foreign Office his characteristic and unvarying attitude of striving for " simple fairness." He had always believed in fair play between class and class, man and man in the British community. Instinctively now he sought to apply the same principle between nation and nation. Had it not been for the stark resolution of the German Empire to bid for the dominancy of the world at the point of the sword, it is possible that he would have succeeded in reconciling Europe and the world to a long era, perhaps ultimately a lasting era, of peace. The enemies of his policy accused him of a disposition to " give away British interests," and I think he would have been always willing enough to give up anything that he thought we had no real right to ; and powerful enough, with that simple, persuasive sincerity of his, to get his countrymen to follow him. All through his long career as Foreign Secretary he was being attacked alternately from two sides, by those who thought that, in his passion for peace and his desire to be just to other nations, he was neglectful of British interests ; and by those who thought that his care for British interests carried him to the borders of Jingoism. Only on rare and important occasions did he speak in defence, and always he carried the country with him.

I had an opportunity once in 1912–13 of seeing

Sir Edward Grey through the eyes of a very mixed collection of foreigners. The Balkan war was over, and after accompanying the Balkan Army in the field I was watching the Peace Conference of London, and in the confidence of several of its delegates. Some of these Balkan statesmen had the very quaintest ideas of diplomacy. Some were rascally liars, others were childish liars, nearly all had a sublime faith in "bluff" (a few, however, were men of high character). It was singular how the personality of Edward Grey soon came to dominate all those men, to inspire the best of them with respect, the worst of them with a fear which was almost superstitious. I can recall one fine Balkan gentleman whose country had had a hard knock, taking comfort from the thought: "Your Sir Edward Grey says that it must be, so we agree." And I can recall another Balkan delegate, of another type, in a state of ludicrous terror because he heard that Sir Edward Grey was going to take cognisance of some childish duplicity he had attempted.

Even the Germans—those of them whose wits were not clean gone in the madness of war-fever—appreciated Sir Edward Grey's sincerity at the same time as they feared it. Lichnowsky has made public tribute to it. Another German noble, now dead, who was for a brief time Ambassador to Great Britain, had the same view. He would quote as a fine apothegm for the diplomat one of Sir Edward Grey's sayings: "It isn't hard to tell the truth. The difficulty is to get the truth believed."

That brings me to the main event of Sir Edward Grey's life—his control of British foreign policy

from 1905 to 1914. Of that in the future many volumes will be written without a doubt. The year 1914 marked one of the great crises in human history, and the attitude of Great Britain was the centre of the matter; and Sir Edward Grey represented the British mind, represented it with absolute fidelity, and was in my opinion the saving hand which made the long-plotted German blow a failure. But that opinion has no right place here. Let Lord Grey himself explain British foreign policy as he understood it, and as it actually was in practice, from 1905 to 1914:—

"We had no jealousy of Germany, no antagonism to German interests. Rather otherwise. When the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy was formed, its purpose was represented to be the keeping of European peace and the stabilising of the European situation. That was favoured by Lord Salisbury and Gladstone and successive British Foreign Ministers. Was it not a common gibe of a section of the French press at one time to speak of it as a 'Quadruple Alliance,' with Great Britain as a fourth partner? It would not be too much to say that we favoured the Triple Alliance. Our troubles seemed to come from the other side in Europe as a rule, as, for example, the Siam, the Fashoda, the Dogger Bank incidents.

"Up to the time of the dismissal of Bismarck the Triple Alliance seemed to be content with a peaceful and defensive rôle. After that it became aggressive. I do not want to be taken as a defender of the Bismarckian policy in all its phases. But until his dismissal there was not that agressive development of German policy. Whatever his ultimate plans, he appeared to be content to keep

the European peace, and British influence in foreign policy was more with Germany than against her. Then Bismarck fell and German policy developed on aggressive lines. British policy was forced in a counter direction because British policy was for peace. This new orientation began under Mr. Balfour and was continued by the logic of events. But British understandings with France and with Russia were always surrounded by precautions against any possibility of our being dragged by the terms of some alliance or agreement into a war which would be in any sense an aggressive war. Our policy was always purely defensive. Its object was to keep the peace of Europe. We made no alliances; up to our declaration of war in 1914 we were committed in no way. We had no secret treaties against Germany.

"Nor was there any basis of truth in the German accusation that we were inspired by a commercial jealousy of her to make war upon her. In 1914 what were the chief centres of any anti-war feeling that existed in Great Britain? The commercial centres. Manchester, for example, was the chief stronghold of pacifist feeling.

"But, as you know, the country was practically unanimous. That was because in the last stage the invasion of Belgium made the issue one of honour. If we had attempted to go into a European war in answer to any argument of interest, even in answer to the argument that by not going in we should be left isolated, the country would have wanted to discuss the decision very thoroughly before it was acted upon. But a country does not discuss on a question of honour. It makes up its mind at once.

"I thought it my duty, regarding a European war as the most frightful catastrophe that could occur, to do my utmost to prevent it. Believing, knowing, that this country did not want war, I felt it my duty also to avoid giving any undertaking which would as its consequence involve us in war or involve others in disaster. You cannot, you should not, pledge a democracy in such a matter without consulting it, without knowing clearly its mind. I could not be sure that on any point of interest the British democracy was willing to go into a great war. And what a cruel disappointment to another nation if I had given a pledge, and it had taken certain dispositions on that pledge, and the pledge had not been kept because the people did not endorse it! A friendly nation might thus be involved in a great calamity and might with justice make the reproach that we involved them in that calamity, for without our pledge they would have submitted to a diplomatic humiliation, but, relying on our pledge, they had stood firm and so encountered destruction. Until Belgium was invaded I was not sure that the British people would make war, and I gave no pledge. When Belgium was invaded it became a question of keeping our obligation of honour, and I knew that the people would keep that."

Lord Grey's views on "secret treaties" he put to me with these lucid axioms:—

"In time of peace there should be no secret treaties. They are contrary in principle to popular government. Peoples are bound without their knowledge to undertakings which they might not have approved if they had been consulted. In time of war it is different. War makes secret

treaties inevitable, for there is not time to consult the people, and discussion would inform the enemy. That is one of the evils of war, one of the arguments against it—that war makes secret arrangements necessary. In my time at the Foreign Office I think I may say with certainty that we made no secret treaties. We reaffirmed an old alliance with Portugal, but that alliance dated from before my time and the terms of it were known. There were negotiations between us, Portugal and Germany in regard to the disposal of Portuguese colonies in Africa in certain events. I wanted to publish the terms of a tentative agreement arising out of these negotiations. Germany objected and, partly for that reason, the agreement was never completed. There were negotiations with Germany, too, in regard to the Middle East. We were prepared to make extreme concessions to Germany, stopping short only at anything which might injure France or sacrifice a vital British interest. But these were also not completed. If they had been completed they would have been disclosed."

That Lord Grey worked for peace with a passionate earnestness during the period from 1908 (when the shadow of the Great European War first fell directly on the world) to 1914, all his friends know. One tells of an incident not long before the outbreak of war. Lord Grey was walking from the Foreign Office with one of his high officials when a "Suffragette" agitator, carrying a pistol, broke out from the crowd. The woman was arrested before any actual attempt was made on Sir Edward Grey's life. Speaking of it afterwards, his tone was that of almost regret

that a happy release had not come to him. "There are years to live through," he said, "which are almost too dreadful to contemplate."

In August, 1914, this man of peace, who had done the utmost that "a common schoolboy sense of fairness" could do to avert war, had to tell the House of Commons that war was inevitable. His dreadful message awakened a national unity which would not have been if that message had come from any other lips. There were very, very few who did not recognise that if Sir Edward Grey said that war was to be, then there was no other honourable way out.

In 1915, when a reconstruction of the Government was decided upon, Sir Edward Grey very reluctantly agreed to continue in office. He felt that his task was done. He was carrying a very heavy private burden, as the exactions of work had almost ruined his eyesight, and rest, complete rest, was ordered. But the opinion of our Allies joined with the opinion of England that he must stay; and for the convenience of his colleagues he went to the House of Lords.

It is probably still a common idea that most men in English public life aspire ultimately to the House of Lords. But some—and these not the least distinguished—prefer to be House of Commons men; and among these was Sir Edward Grey. In his case it was not that to take a peerage was to bar the way to the Prime Ministership (there will probably never again be a peer Prime Minister of Great Britain), for of his political life dutifulness, not ambition, was the motive; but he had a preference of sentiment to remain a Commoner. But Constitutional usage dictated

that one at least of the five great Secretaries of State should be a peer. It was a choice between him and four other colleagues, none of whom wished to leave the Commons. Sir Edward Grey had already decided not to stand again for Berwick-on-Tweed. The trouble with his eyesight had made his retirement soon into private life necessary. He was only remaining in office to see the war through, and had told his constituents that that would be his last Parliament. So he put on the sacrificial garland and went up to the gilded Chamber as Viscount Grey of Fallodon. In 1916 he gave up office.

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A man of peace in 1914, now after the Great War, Lord Grey feels that war is an utter evil, from the dread of which humanity must be in some way relieved. "The human race," he says, "has acquired such appalling powers of destruction that if it has not sufficient moral power to control them the race must perish. This war was terrible enough. A next war, if it ever came, would be still more terrible, and wars would grow in intensity until mankind was annihilated. It is not possible to contemplate what war means to-day, and what it is going to mean, without coming to a resolve to do anything possible to avert war. A scientific friend tells me that next war there will be no fighting in the old sense of the term. It will all be killing by poison gas."

Lord Grey went on to speak of the other side of the miseries of war, of the loneliness of men who have lost their friends, the helplessness of men who have lost limbs or health. But he did not speak

in a spirit of vain regret for what is past. The war of 1914 he knows to have been inevitable. Its result he welcomed with deep satisfaction as relieving humanity of a deadly peril. But to strive that it should be the last great war is now the chief purpose of his life as he takes up again the burden of public affairs, fortunately with recovered eyesight.

He was in some way betrayed into public life by that "common schoolboy sense of fairness," wakened indignant at an injustice to his Northumberland neighbours; and then was led by circumstances from task to task until finally he was set as the Warden of the Marches when the German wave broke over Europe. For years he was bound to the wheel, escaping for brief intervals only to the streams, and moors, and woods, which held the real joys of life for him: and in each one of those years he had hoped for a near release. But always there was a task to be done, a duty to be fulfilled. The screaming abuse which he won from those whom he confounded was, of course, no source of trouble—nor, I think, was it a source of consolation, for Lord Grey lacks a sense of malice. He is the Englishman at his best—the proof of the race.

CHAPTER X

"THE ENGLISH COUNTRY GENTLEMAN" AS ADMINISTRATOR

ANOTHER type of English public man who inspired this outside observer with a feeling of steady confidence in the race was Viscount Long (better known as Mr. Walter Long). He is the typical good administrator, the man who does things quietly and smoothly.

"What have I found the secret of success in public life?" Mr. Walter Long once answered to a question of mine, "I fear I cannot give an answer. You see I do not claim to have achieved success. I have filled certain positions; done my best in them, whether it has been a matter of administering English local government or Irish government, or the Colonial Office or the Navy. But success as a public man—that I would not say I had won: and I think I may say I have never sought success. To take some share in the affairs of my country, that I wanted to do. It was a duty; and the tradition of the family; and so I entered Parliament. But I did not wish to take an office in the Government when office was first offered to me. I was living out of town, and I felt it difficult to give up, for the work of a department, so much larger a share of my time from the country life, which is the only life that really appeals to me. I like fields better than streets, the saddle

better than the desk. But it seemed that it was my duty to accept. And that first office led to another, and another. I have been in the Government ever since—except when my party was out of power. I have tried to say 'No' more than once when posts were offered to me, but never have been able to get a refusal accepted. One must do the work that comes to one's hand."

He spoke thus quite sincerely and quite according to his character, seeking to make little of a great record of consistent and useful patriotism. Mr. Walter Long was in the Local Government Board whilst there was recast the whole Local Government system. He was a successful Minister for Agriculture. As Secretary for Ireland he brought such peace and order to that distressful land as it had never known before, and has not known since. As Secretary of State for the Colonies he was at the helm while were carried through great decisions which changed the whole constitutional system of our Empire. As First Lord of the Admiralty he had the difficult task of bringing the Navy, which was the great bulwark of civilisation during the Great War, back to a peace standard.

It is now some forty years since Mr. Long entered Parliament. His county wanted him to enter Parliament after his father's death. He had to accept the responsibility. There had been a Long in the House of Commons since the thirteenth century. His father had been a member, and his grandfather, and his great-grandfather. To have refused would have been to go back on the family tradition, to have shirked the work that it seemed to be his duty to do. Young Walter Long at the time wanted to be a soldier, not a politician, but

the Nation's service called him to Parliament. So he put aside thoughts of a cavalry regiment and went into Parliament, and into the Yeomanry.

He was—according to his contemporaries of the time—an extraordinarily good member of Parliament: not speaking very often, but always saying the sound, sensible thing, coming with a few plain sentences to the heart of an issue and making it quite clear to all. So Lord Salisbury insisted on bringing him into the circle of administrators. Again Mr. Walter Long dutifully accepted. His own ideas were to remain a private member, coming up to town for the Parliamentary Sessions (then not unduly long), and, having thus done his fair share for the nation, going back to enjoy the life of a country gentleman; and his ambition was to be M.F.H.

As a member of the Government Mr. Long proved even more successful than as a private member. He had a way with him in debate that got Bills through, and in his department that won loyal and harmonious service from everybody. Members of Parliament and members of the Civil Service alike fell under the spell of this country gentleman who spoke suavely, though clearly, and went to the point directly. Thus one office led to another. Mr. Walter Long was marked down to be chosen always for what was at the moment the difficult and possibly the thankless task. Always the task was carried through with success.

It is this way of doing big things easily, simply, undramatically, without personal pride or self-consciousness that has built up the British Empire. It is typical of the English country gentleman, the core of the British power throughout the world.

You may see the type at work everywhere the Flag flies. A youngster, fresh from Public School and University, whose unassuming manner confirms to the casual observer his estimate of himself as being a very ordinary chap, goes to some outpost of Empire and quietly, naturally, as if by instinct, sits down to Big Work. There is nothing sensational in his methods: he does not talk much, does not fuss at all, is fair, equable, hard-working and good tempered; and he gets to be done what he wants to be done. So the British Empire thrives. From the young men at the small outposts, to such men as Mr. Walter Long, or the late Lord Cromer at the great head-quarters, it is the same story. If an observer of the British Empire from outside kept his eyes alone on the lime-lit stage where the much-advertised celebrities show their paces, he would marvel how the great fabric of the Empire can stand so firmly and grow so strongly. But if he looks behind the scenes he sees the quiet men at their work and he understands.

Mr. Walter Long, as I have said, refused to speak of the "secret of his success." I tried another path.

"Well, can you say what in your opinion is the secret of good government?"

"In the work of government it is the administrative side that is of the first importance. Good administration is in effect good government: and the secret of good administration is to be fair to all people: to be fair not only in action, but to be fair-minded and to be courteous always. You should never aim to make yourself popular. If you find that you are popular, so much the better; but to court popularity is fatal to sincere

administration. You should always be accessible to everybody. The man who shuts himself up from his friends, or from his opponents, cannot hope to get always a fair view of things.

"Then, an administrator must make himself master of all the facts of the problems which he has to settle. He must not trust to others to do that for him. Having mastered his facts, he should make up his mind, with a thought only to do what is the fair thing—not the thing best for his party, nor the thing best for popularity, but the fair thing. Having made up his mind, he should announce his decision courteously and should then stand to it firmly, no matter what clamour he may have to face. Indecision is fatal to good administration. Sometimes in affairs there is more than one line by following which the result sought can be reached. Perhaps, even, it does not matter much which line is taken. But to take one line, hesitate, go back on it, and then try another—that is almost always bad."

Some years ago, in Galway, an old Irish priest said to me something which proved the wholesomeness of Mr. Walter Long's prescription. The old priest was talking sadly of "the botherances and disturbances" that were going on then in Ireland, and he did not hesitate to suggest that the English were not wholly to blame.

"The days that Mr. Walter Long was at the Castle," he said, "those days it looked as if poor old Ireland were going to have peace; and, short of the fact that he was not a son of the Church, but a misguided Protestant, you couldn't have had a finer gentleman than Mr. Walter Long. He was that fair and just; and the corner-boys did not

have the impudence to make any trouble while he was about. I tell you there were no riotings or shootings, and no widows made in Ireland in those days."

Mr. Long smiled when I told him this.

"It is true," he said, "that I got on well in Ireland. But then the people were extraordinarily kind and helpful to me, the people of all classes and of all shades of political thought. I lived in Ireland and hunted with the Meath Hounds whilst I was Secretary, and had really a most pleasant time. Perhaps it was not altogether anticipated that a Conservative Secretary should have had that kind of experience: the office had a reputation for being a difficult one. I remember, on first assuming office, that, going into the court-yard of the Castle, my eye caught sight of the statue of Justice that is there. Perhaps I was thinking over in my mind, more or less consciously, the problems of the task before me, for I can recollect saying to myself: 'I shall try to be just to all the people.' To the best of my ability I stuck to that: and everybody, as I have said, was kind and helpful, the officials loyal and hard-working, the people quite reasonable when they saw that I tried to be fair and was firm.

"Certainly all disorder stopped. The police never fired a shot and never drew a baton during my term of office. I took care always that when it was necessary to stop a meeting or a demonstration there was an amply sufficient force for the purpose. That avoided trouble. To attempt a firm action with insufficient force is to invite opposition. Cattle-driving was stopped. If I said that a meeting was not to be held because it might

lead to disorder, then that meeting was not held and in time the people found that if I said they were not to do a thing it was best not to try. And on the whole they were most kind to me. Of course, I was abused a good deal in some quarters ; and called names ; and my life was threatened. That only accentuated the general kindness and the general orderliness which I met with. I was not quite a year in Ireland. When I left, the country was quiet and prosperous. Indeed, my successor, who was in the opposite political camp of course, said publicly that ' Ireland was more peaceful and more prosperous than it had been for a hundred years.' "

Regarding the British Civil Service generally, Mr. Walter Long is generous in appreciation :—

" I think the most abiding recollection in my mind of my long experience in many public offices is connected with the wonderful ability, unfailing loyalty and devotion to duty of the members of our great Civil Service. I am quite sure that the British public do not realise how great a debt they owe to these devoted men. Their ability is far above the average, and yet they get but little credit for it ; while they are constantly abused for any failures that may occur in their departments—and are always accused of being bound by ' red tape.' Those who know them as I do, know that there isn't the smallest foundation for these charges. I believe it to be the finest service in the world and I am very glad to pay my small tribute of praise and gratitude to them."

It was in the natural order of things that in 1917 Mr. Walter Long should be asked to take the Colonial Office. Delicate and difficult questions

were on the horizon. The events of the war had made obsolete the old relations between the Dominions and the Mother Country. It had become plain that the last remnants of "Colonial dependency," slight as they were, encountered resentment in the minds of Dominion statesmen. The time was ripe for another great development in the Imperial relationship, a conversion of the Imperial bond into a full, free and equal partnership. At the same time there was to be confronted the awkward anomaly of the position of India, the greatest unit of the Empire overseas, and yet not recognised as such, not represented at Imperial Conferences.

Mr. Walter Long speaks of his experience at the Colonial Office with a real enthusiasm.

"It taught me a great deal," he says, "I found a great stimulus and encouragement in meeting with the vigorous minds of our statesmen from the Dominions. They had such a clear outlook. I was President of the two Imperial Conferences of 1917 and 1918 which by their decisions changed the whole basis of our Imperial system. The Dominions took their places as sister nations, and we met and discussed everything from the standpoint of a sisterhood of nations. I had made up my mind that India must come into the Imperial partnership. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who was then at the India Office, agreed, and Austen and I brought India in. The Dominions welcomed her cordially; there was no hint of disagreement."

"There was no hint of disagreement." That really tells the story of how men like Lord Long get things done. There are some men who, if they have to state an axiom of Euclid, put it in such a way

that somebody is tempted to search into the remotest Einstein recesses of relative thought to see if they cannot raise an objection. But this is not Mr. Walter Long's way.

Future recorders will note, perhaps with wonder, the fact that it was Mr. Walter Long, the typical Conservative, who presided at the deliberations which sanctioned so great a change in our Imperial system. But as Mr. Long says, "I am a Conservative, but I live with my eyes open." The change was logical; it was backed by an overwhelming demand; it promised to have the best results. So Mr. Long saw it through.

All that he has done seems to Mr. Walter Long to have been the routine work of a country gentleman, perforce turned statesman, and giving to the great affairs of the world just the same fair, courteous, firm attention that he would to the Hunt in his district. It is the faculty of doing big work in that spirit which has made England's position in the world.

CHAPTER XI

A PROBLEM IN ENGLISH POLITICS

I SHALL finish this gossip on English politics with a note on yet another type—Lord Robert Cecil, whose career offers the students of English public life an interesting problem. Will a Cecil again come to supreme political power in Great Britain? Its answer calls for some forecast of the future of English democracy.

"A Cecil" is used as a generic term. Is it possible for a man with the genius for statecraft of the Elizabethan Cecil, the Jacobean Cecil, *and* with their limitations in the way of becoming what the music-hall manager of to-day would call "a popular turn," to take and hold the leadership of the England of to-day? When Lord Robert Cecil's course is run there will be an answer to that. At present, the average student of politics may be inclined to think that the better chances are for a negative answer: to hold that there are no chances in a modern democracy for sincerity and ability without a touch of the Cleon spirit.

I recall an American acquaintance who claimed close friendship with Mr. William Taft, shaking his head sapiently over that gentleman's defeat on his second Presidential candidature:

"I said to him, 'William,' I said, 'you are bound to fall in. You are not getting at the great heart of the people. Just conjure up Mr.

McKinley in the midst of all the turmoil and excitement of his election finding time to read the Bible one hour every day to his sick wife; *and the fact in all the papers.* It is something like that you want and you haven't got it.' "

But perhaps the average student of politics will prove to be in the wrong, and democracy, when it has cut its wisdom teeth, will have the same eye for the solid qualities as has a wise autocrat. The event will come to proof within the life of this generation, and Lord Robert Cecil's political progress will have the interest of being one test of the issue: whether it is passing phase or permanent characteristic of our new political thought to respond better to an emotional than to an intellectual appeal and to prefer flattery to service.

In Lord Robert Cecil there is a man who, in the course of a short political career, marked as yet by only one great administrative opportunity,* has shown in an extraordinary way a return to the manner of thought of the first Cecils. He has the remorseless industry, the instinct for statecraft, the genius for administration, the passion for serving his country. But Lord Robert Cecil has not the qualities of the demagogue. Not a reactionary at all—indeed, on most points of policy in the van with the most advanced of reasonable reformers—still he will not play the game as Mr. —— or Mr. —— plays it. He will offer all that intellect and devotion can offer to his country. He will be passionate as an idealist, but he will not "tear a passion to tatters." Can he succeed as a leader?

I tried once to get enlightenment on that question

* This was written before May, 1923.

by questioning and cross-questioning him about his first prompting to politics. Some men in public life can recall an incident, a speech, a book which first set their thoughts to Parliament and Government. Other men had obviously their prompting in a greed or a resentment. But search his mind as he would—and he was courteously patient in the effort—Lord Robert Cecil could not recall any "first prompting." It was just heredity.

"I cannot remember any particular 'first prompting.' I seem to have been always interested in public life; yes, as a boy even. It came as the natural thing, I suppose. Nor can I remember any particular personage in the public life of the past whose speeches or acts shaped my course towards politics. The younger Pitt perhaps. His ideas were very attractive. Castlereagh, too. Yes, of course, the early Cecils, the Elizabethan and the Jacobean Cecils—two very different characters really, though their careers seem much alike. And I think on the whole I am more sympathetic to the Lord Burleigh of Elizabeth's time than to the Robert Cecil of James's time. I am attracted to what I consider was the key-note of Burleigh's policy—to avoid internal dissensions and to make England a really united nation."

"And no other personal influence to public life?"

Lord Robert Cecil hesitated. "Perhaps it would seem absurd to mention it, but, of course my father."

Illuminating the hesitancy, the almost awkwardness, of the reply. It is, of course, known that the influence of a great father has been of vital force in shaping Lord Robert Cecil's political life; and it would be patent to the beginner in the science of "political publicity" that a statement of that

influence, a dwelling upon it, an advertisement of it, might be of popular advantage. But to attempt that would be outside Lord Robert Cecil's austere character; it would savour of bringing private things into public life. To the nation's service he would give his work, but insists on keeping to himself the inner things.

It is the antithesis of the attitude of a very notorious (and once very popular) humbug who prospered on the outskirts of British public life for some years. He, going out to visit the battle-fields in France, asked at one point to be left alone "to muse with our noble dead"—having given preliminary warning to the official photographer to " take " him in a noble attitude of musing !

To ask Lord Robert Cecil as to what books had influenced him vitally in political thought was again to draw a blank. He recalled with appreciation Sir Henry Maine, and Dicey's " Law of the Constitution," but could not confess to any " vital influence." Again the negative result was of some value, confirming the impression of a man approaching the problems of the State with an open mind to judge what is necessary for the times and to strive to effect that. It is something between the doctrinaire spirit and the opportunist spirit—something which makes this modern Cecil the protagonist of the League of Nations in foreign politics and in domestic politics brings him close to the moderate men of the Labour Party.

Educated at Eton and going on to University College, Oxford, Lord Robert Cecil discovered in the Oxford Union early chances to " find himself " as a student of politics and as a public speaker. He remembers that he took to debating

societies at once. He became President of the Oxford Union, and was one of its traditional presidents. After three decades the "Union" still keeps memory of him, and his name often crops up in its debates. I was recently at a debate on "Direct Action" there—the question before "the House" being whether it was warrantable for a trade union to strike for a political end—and eventually one speaker brought in as his argument that we did not want direct action, we did not want anything more to set this country on a path of peaceful and happy reform than "to put it in charge of Lord Robert Cecil"!

Leaving the University, Lord Robert Cecil became private secretary to his father, the Marquess of Salisbury, the last of the historic Conservatives, a man who honestly believed that it was his ordained task to govern England for England's good and that he was the best judge of what was England's good. As his father's secretary, Lord Robert served in the soundest school of apprenticeship to learn the technic of statesmanship. He was equipped now to plunge into the political career which clearly was the object of his life.

It is characteristic of him that he put aside the temptation of entering the House of Commons at once. For a sound political career in England one wants money—not a huge fortune, but an "independence." Otherwise it is necessary to mix some business with politics, and who can be sure that the business will not in some way insist on colouring the politics? Lord Robert Cecil went to the Bar for a term of years, as much—one may surmise—to make sure of a monetary independence as to complete (accepting Cicero's

prescription) his training for public affairs. At the Bar, as might have been expected, he was not famed as a criminal advocate, nor as an eloquent pleader of doubtful causes; but in that branch of legal work which requires cool, clear intellect he showed as a master.

Of Lord Robert Cecil as a lawyer I have one outstanding recollection. He was pitted on this occasion against one of the keenest, subtlest minds of England in a duel of wits. (It would be best not to particularise further; the incident was a chapter of a story which may well be forgotten.) The contest was one that stands out in my memory still—has not been effaced even by experiences of the battles of the Great War—as a relentless struggle *à outrance*. The weapons were words only, and no rude word was spoken on either side, but wielded as they were remorselessly, they seared and wounded. At the end the other antagonist was stricken, as it seemed, to the death by the cold, pitiless inquisition to which he had been subjected. There was a note of cruelty in that inquisition; of *saeva indignatio* against what seemed a breach of public trust. A wholesome cruelty! A little of it is as salt in public life.

Lord Robert Cecil entered the House of Commons first as member for St. Marylebone, a London suburban seat. It was in the year of the great Unionist downfall. The candidate designed for the seat failed to stand for some reason, and Lord Robert Cecil was a "stop-gap." He won the seat, and in the Parliament which followed took up at once a strong line. The Unionist opposition, reduced almost to powerlessness by

the electors, made its position worse by internal dissensions between the "Tariff Reformers" with a platform of Imperial Preference, which involved the imposition of certain duties on food, and the Free Traders, in the majority, who took the view that, whilst other tariff duties were possible of consideration, no duties on food articles could be considered. Lord Robert Cecil was among the "Free Fooders," as they were called, and he was strongly attacked in his own electorate by a stalwart Unionist and advocate of Imperial Preference, Sir Richard Jebb. (I joined very heartily in the attack, being convinced that the "Free Fooders" were quite in the wrong, and spoke at a score of meetings against "Bob Cecil.")

Lord Robert Cecil, hating most of all things internal dissension, abandoned his candidature for Marylebone, and was, after an interval in the wilderness, returned for a Hertfordshire seat. In the new Parliament the position of the Unionists, though much improved numerically, was still forlorn, chiefly because of the continuance of their domestic strife. From this, so far as he could, Lord Robert Cecil kept aloof, though he made no concession at all on the principles he held. The outlook could not have seemed very promising to him.

When the serious developments of the war made it necessary to call every man of note to the Councils of the State, Lord Robert Cecil's first opportunity came. In the Foreign Office—from 1915 until the end of the war—he proved one of the pillars of our national strength. As the minister in charge of blockade matters he showed a genius for practical statesmanship. The post was a very delicate one. The problem was to reconcile the

most useful possible exercise of British sea-power against the enemy with enough consideration of the interests of neutrals to prevent them from being driven into the enemy's camp. A distinguished American (an Intelligence officer) told me at G.H.Q., France, that "Your Cecil was one of the men who helped largely to bring America into the war."

Lord Robert Cecil discussed with me frankly one day the blockade policy, making the reservation only that certain facts in regard to our relations with other powers should not be discussed, as even at this day harm might follow.

"In the first place," said Lord Robert Cecil, "I may state that in foreign affairs I was, and am, a complete disciple of Edward Grey. It was his policy that I took as a guide while I was in the Foreign Office. The real danger to Great Britain during the early years of the war was that we should lose the sympathy and support of the outside world, and especially to the United States. At any time within the first three years of the war, if we had antagonised the United States, she had it in her power to destroy our chances of victory, or to break our blockade. By merely stopping the assistance which we were getting from her citizens she could have done this. That was the peril to be avoided, the forcing of the United States into an attitude of antagonism.

"It did not make matters easier, that the United States was, historically, not friendly to our conception of the legitimate use of sea-power. There is no harm in pointing that out now, for several public announcements during the war have made it plain. Since 1812 the United States

had been the defender of what was called—loosely called, in my opinion—' the Freedom of the Seas ' —and the United States' conception of the freedom of the seas was in conflict with our ideas of an effective blockade. Anything, then, that would have appeared to be a tyrannical exercise of the power of the blockade might have had the effect of antagonising the United States.

" It was not only, of course, on points affecting the United States directly that her conception of sea rights had to be considered ; it had also to be considered as affecting our relations with all neutrals. It was our effort to take no action with regard to any neutral nation which could not be defended in an American court of public opinion. Thus we could not utilise our sea-power to its full effect. The Foreign Office had to conciliate, or to find a middle way between two opposites ; to secure so much as was vitally important to our blockade policy and yet not to antagonise any important section of neutral opinion."

" You had to face much hostile criticism in this."

" Yes ; there was a great deal of ignorant criticism—coming, too, from quarters whence it was hardly expected. Some people did not realise that up to 1916 our position was very delicate ; a blundering diplomacy might have ruined all."

Lord Robert Cecil went on a little whimsically :

" Some of our ultra-patriotic critics would have had us follow just such a policy as the Germans were following to their ruin. If you analyse the German policy you will see that it was always governed by the idea of what was strictly within their rights, their legal rights, to do, and that

they never considered the broad equity of a question. The Germans were always committing acts for which they could find a legitimate reason, but which were stupidly contrary to the general sentiments of humanity. There were many of their actions—even those which most outraged world opinion—which, if you could isolate them strictly, and look at them in the light of what was the military law at the moment and the place, could be justified in a way; but yet which were utterly stupid in their effect on the world. What killed the German cause was an inability to understand the difference between what is legal and what is right.

"The stupidity of the Germans was colossal. Often it saved us out of a very tight corner. I could recall occasions when we were in difficulties out of which no plain way seemed to show, and the Germans invariably came to the rescue by doing something so outrageous that we were quite safe again. The shooting of Miss Cavell, for one instance! Can one imagine a grosser stupidity? What does it matter what military regulation or law they could plead to try to represent it as legitimate? The German was always for his strict rights—or what he thought were his strict rights—and never for a broad equity. There were some people who would have had our blockade policy worked on the same principles."

Asked as to what he thought were the problems of the future for the public man, Lord Robert Cecil said:

"In domestic politics the great danger is a division of the community based on classes, and not on opinions. The wickedest work that a public

man can set his hand to is that of exciting the hatred of one class for another class, and so splitting up the nation. Promoting the union of classes within the nation for the common good, seeking a fair partnership between labour and capital, securing as high an ideal of personal liberty as possible—that is the domestic programme.

"In the matter of foreign policy, wise statesmanship should pursue the policy of the League of Nations and all that it implies. To realise that policy, it is necessary, once and for all, to abandon the theory that there is only so much world prosperity and that a nation cannot increase its own prosperity except at the expense of another nation. The truth is that there is in the world practically unlimited opportunity. There is enough prosperity for everybody and prosperity of other nations is an advantage and not a disadvantage. If we see another nation forging ahead it should be a call not for jealousy or hostility on our part, but for greater exertion to better our own conditions."

Fraternity within the nation and fraternal relations with other nations—that is the platform of this modern Cecil. It will be of more than personal interest to note how he fares in its advocacy, having the arts of the statesman but not those of the demagogue. In any event it will be said of him, as truly as Elizabeth said to the Cecil of her day: "This judgement I have of you, that you will not be corrupted with any manner of gifts and that you will be faithful to the State."

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CHAPTER XII

ENGLAND AND THE GREAT WAR

I WOULD conclude this gossip as I began it, in the mood of reminiscence of the Great War—its making and its waging. Since the Armistice I have had more than once strong prompting from the "never ending audacity of elected persons" to go back to an older feeling of pessimism and to feel a doubt as to whether the stage of decay had not set in. But always I can recall some war memory and am reassured by it, for it says quite clearly: "You know these English people are, above all peoples, patient, just, good-humoured, resolute. Their tolerance and their slowness to take up a quarrel may make them seem at some moment stupid, careless of evil. But in the end they will come through with victorious and clean standards as they came through the Great War."

* * * * *

Chance gave me some good opportunities to see the drift of European policy in the years before the war. I was, for instance, abroad in Italy at the time of the "Agadir" crisis, and learnt fairly certainly that not only Italy but also Austria, was likely to abandon the German Empire in the event of her forcing on a European War at the time.

The prompting to be curious at that juncture came in rather a strange way. I was eating in a

dining car on an Italian train and the German waiter, recognising me to be English, was laboriously rude during the course of the meal. I had intended, by way of reprisal, to dock him of his tip and to explain to him why, but at one stage his rudeness became so offensive, that an Italian at a neighbouring table interfered and threatened "to throw the 'miserable German' out of the window if he dared to be rude on Italian soil to an Englishman." Subsequently the Italian and I had cigarettes and coffee together.

I was curious to know whether his anger had been inspired purely by politeness. It seemed to me curious that in the midst of a grave diplomatic trouble between England and the predominant partner of the Triple Alliance an Italian should be so furiously friendly to an English stranger. What he told me induced me to leave the train and spend a day or two on the Italian-Austrian frontier.

From what I saw I came to the conclusion that if Austria stood by Germany in the Agadir crisis, Italy was likely to attack Austria, but the prospects were that Austria would "stand from under."

Going back to London, I found a friend in the Admiralty interested, but not at all surprised at my information, and quite willing that it should find its way into the Press. Two important London newspapers in turn welcomed as "big news" the information which I brought, and then decided not to publish. In the case of one of them, I had direct knowledge that the reason for the refusal was a prompting from our Foreign Office.

Apparently Germany was faced by the defection of both her Allies and was compelled to suffer a diplomatic defeat rather than incur the risks of war

under those conditions, and the British Government was extremely anxious to avoid any appearance of humiliating Germany. If my impression was correct, and I think it was, it is an interesting side-light on the carefully peaceful policy of the British Government in the later years of the German war threat.

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Going out to the Balkan War in 1912 (as correspondent for the *Morning Post*), at the conclusion of the first bout of hostilities, I returned to London, and during the London Peace Conference was very closely in touch with the negotiations at that Conference, and the concurrent Ambassadors' Conference. There was always obtruding the fact that Sir Edward Grey was passionately eager for peace at any price consistent with the national honour and dignity.

It will be remembered that an incident of the campaign was the penetration by the Serbian troops to the Adriatic coast, and that an incident of the Peace Conference was the brusque demand on the part of Austria that Serbia should give up this fruit of victory. In this demand Austria was strongly backed up by Germany, who seemed then already to have settled on her plan for the European Great War, that it was necessary to involve Austria first in order to make sure of her as an ally. France, I understand, was inclined to back the Serbians in their quite legitimate claim to hold the territory which they had conquered and which was part of their old Kingdom. The Balkan League at that time was still apparently firm in union, and King Ferdinand of Bulgaria had not

been bought out of it by the German Powers, and the League had in the field great armies, flushed with victory. Obviously, if the European War had come then, the position of the Germanic Powers, with the hostile Balkan League armies on their southern flank, would have been critical, if not hopeless. France, as I understand, recognised this and wished the challenge of the German Powers to be taken up then.

Great Britain, however, was all for peace, and in time Russia came round to her view and France fell into line. Serbia had to give way. I recall the day after this decision was announced, I had as guest at lunch the late M. Nicolitch, President of the Serbian Parliament, and a statesman possessing a strength of mind and a candid straightforwardness which are very rare in Balkan politics. I was fortunate enough to enjoy his confidence and he told me fully of the negotiations that had led up to the painful decision that Serbia must leave the Adriatic.

At this lunch a lady expressed her sympathy with M. Nicolitch regarding the disappointment his people had suffered. He was a polite diplomat as well as a candid man, and I think his reply was very charming. "Ah, madam," he said, "it is indeed unfortunate, for now that we are away from the sea we are no longer the neighbour of England."

I don't think I ever heard English sea power acknowledged more prettily.

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In the early Spring of 1914, when it was quite certain to those who had any inside knowledge of

the European position, that Germany intended war, and intended it at a very early date, I was in Paris during the State visit of our King and Queen. In spite of all the great festivities arranged for the occasion, this visit left me with a tragic impression. It was an open secret that the French Government had asked from the British Government on this occasion a definite pledge of support when the German attack came, and that this pledge had been refused.

A French friend of mine in a humble walk of life, but, like most Frenchmen, keenly interested and very well informed in European affairs, talked this fact over with me in a spirit of despairing resignation which was truly poignant. He knew that France was to be attacked; he did not feel very confident about her chances of a successful defence. He thought that the British refusal to promise help was unwise in the interests of Great Britain herself as well as of the rest of Europe. He feared that all that was left for France was to die with her flag flying. So desperate had been the humiliations to which his country had been subjected year by year since 1870, that he almost welcomed the end. "If it is death," he said, "it is death which ends tyranny." He went on to explain (but not to argue, for he seemed to think that the British people were too obsessed by the idea of preserving peace to listen to reason) that it would infallibly be the turn of Great Britain to be swallowed up by the German Powers very soon afterwards.

I agreed with him. I could not imagine how British statesmen could be blind to all the evidence that Prussia had taken up the Napoleonic idea of

putting Europe under one Power, had distorted and defaced it with some essentially Prussian accretions and had embarked upon a series of campaigns to make Europe Prussian. The faults of Napoleon's plan, according to the Prussian mind, were just those saving qualities in it which had some appeal to the civilised imagination and had aroused sympathy in some quarters, even in England. The Prussian scheme of dominating Europe cut away all pretence of liberty or of democracy and based itself on military absolutism and Divine Right of Kings: and it cut away all limitation on the ruthlessness of war. The spirit which made Napoleon question whether the sentiment of civilised humanity would tolerate the use of submarines (then first suggested) to countervail England's sea power was to the Prussian mind a weakness. Prussia thought victory would come from campaigns waged by a people disciplined out of all democratic ideas and out of all scruples limiting the ferocity of war.

A series of logical and closely co-ordinated acts of aggression showed the working out of this thought. Denmark was attacked and robbed of valuable provinces. The entire absence of any sense of scruple or shame in this transaction was shown by Prussia seeking Austria as a partner in the assault on so tiny a nation. It was not that Austrian battalions were needed, but that a pretext for a subsequent attack on Austria was sought. That attack on Austria followed, and it gave Prussia the hegemony of the German race in Europe, which Austria had previously held by right of tradition, of heritage and of superior civilisation.

Two of the planned series of wars had now been waged successfully. The third was made on France, to destroy France as a first-class Power. The Prussian peace conditions of mutilation and robbery were framed to secure that end. They failed because of the courage of the French race. Then, with all the resources of its absolutist militarism, Prussia prepared for the next move.

Prussia was always rattling the sabre to bully Europe between 1870 and 1914: at one time threatening Russia with war: at another time France. Prussia was *agent-provocateur* as well as bully; striving to make war between Italy and France over Tunis: between France and England over the Sudan: between England and Russia over the Dogger Bank incident: between Russia and Austria over Bosnia: between England and the United States over the Monroe doctrine. No effort was on too low a plane to further the Prussian aims: *e.g.* the encouragement and then the abandonment of the Boers in South Africa; the aid to the Turks to crush the Greeks; the encouragement of the Turkish massacres in Armenia; the breaking up of the Balkan League which had promised to the sorely vexed Balkan States some surcease from mutual slaughter and some hope of happy existence. The acts of the Prussian Empire from the war against Denmark to the war of 1914, proclaimed without leaving the shadow of a doubt, the Prussian aim: to win dominion over Europe. To keep on hoping for peace as late as the spring of 1914 seemed folly.

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I left England on August Bank Holiday, 1914,

to join the Belgian Army (as war correspondent for the *Morning Post*) in a bitter mood. Great Britain on that date was still out of the war, and, so far as I knew, intended to keep out, and follow a blind and ignoble policy of neutrality in an issue which affected the very existence of European civilisation. I went out to do my work, for it is necessary to live, but with a very firm resolve never to come back to England—if, by the chance of events, it happened that after the war there was left a non-German England to come back to.

Leaving Charing Cross that night on my way to Brussels *via* Boulogne (the Ostend services had been stopped) I took what was announced as the last train to connect with France. The compartment in which I sat had places for six, and there were two of those filled. Outside on the platform was a little knot of French residents of London seeking to go back to France to take up their military duties. There were no places for them in the 3rd class carriages, and the English railway officials had locked our 1st class compartment. "Shall we be left behind?" they asked; decided unanimously "No!" smashed one of the windows of the carriage and through the broken glass wriggled into the compartment. They were going out to offer up their lives for their country, and to break through a railway window was a trifle.

Going down to Dover there were nine of us sitting and standing in the compartment. By a coincidence one of them was my fencing master in London. Another, I learnt, was a motor-car agent in rather a large way of business. He had simply locked up his place and had come away, not waiting to realise anything. The Great War had

come: the Fatherland demanded his life; and neutral England might have stopped him if he had delayed another day.

I landed in France with some bitterness against my own people, and it was not until I reached Lille on the way to Brussels, that I learnt that Great Britain had "joined up" and that our honour was saved. That night in Lille was one to remember for all the years to come. The French people seemed confident that with Great Britain at their side the issue was no longer in doubt. In place of the depression and anger which had been before in their hearts, there was now a wave of joyous confidence and gratitude. The night was spent in great demonstrations at which one heard attempts to sing the British National Anthem as well as the Marseillaise in the intervals of uprooting the German spy establishments which were known to exist in the city.

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Whilst with the Belgian Army from August to December, 1914, I was not much in touch with events in England. But I had heard—with a thrill of pride for the high courage that the action showed—of the dispatch of the Regular Army to France. The British Government in 1914 was agonisingly slow in coming to the great decision, in my opinion. But it acted nobly and courageously once the decision was made. It was no light thing to send abroad the whole strength of the Regular Army when the Germans were howling their Hymn of Hate against England and a German invasion of the British coast was more than a possibility.

Subsequently I had the rather pitiful task of

explaining to my Belgian friends that the English would certainly be coming over to their help very, very soon. The Belgians had anticipated that after the stand they had made in front of Liege and, subsequently, on the Haelen–Namur line, their Allies would have ranged themselves by their side. A great decisive battle in front of Brussels was at first generally forecasted. All this, of course, was vanity, and I had enough knowledge of the general position to understand that a deployment of the French and British Armies to defend the Belgian capital was unlikely. But after Brussels had fallen, and the Belgian Army had taken refuge in the fortress of Antwerp, I had the idea—rightly or wrongly—that the Allies might have done a little more on that section of the line. At the time of the Battle of the Marne, the Belgians made an effective sortie from Antwerp, and one morning I was with their advance guards within sight of Louvain. With a little help then it seemed to me possible that Louvain might have been recaptured, and the line of communication of the right flank of the German invading army cut.

When help was at last sent to the Belgian Army, it took the form of the British Naval Division, a force which in the main was untrained and partly unarmed. I saw officers of that force who had no training at all, and men who did not know how to load their rifles. Further, this force was thrown into Antwerp at a time when the city in effect had fallen. The line of forts had been breached and the heavy artillery of the enemy had been brought into position to bombard the city. It was a sacrifice of brave men, and not in any sense of the word a relief.

It was pathetic to note what an access of mistaken confidence the Belgians had from the arrival of the British contingent. On the morning of Saturday, October 3rd, Antwerp, with her lines of defence broken through, was already doomed. That afternoon the first of the British forces (trained Royal Marines these) arrived, coming into Antwerp from the coast by motor buses, brought over from London. The motor buses flaunted the advertisements of a patriotic play which Mr. Seymour Hicks was then producing in London entitled "England Expects." The British contingent took up a position at Lierre, but very few of them were able to fire a shot at the enemy. They sat down in the trenches, were shelled, were in great numbers killed, and then retired. On the evening of Thursday, October 8th, the evacuation of the city and the retreat of the army to Ostend began.

I elected to stay in the city to see the end, and on Friday morning, October 9th, went out in the early hours to note the progress of the bombardment, and encountered near the railway station two London stragglers of the Naval Division. They asked me the way to their regiment. Knowing that it was hopeless for them to rejoin the retreating troops, I advised them to make their way to the Dutch frontier, and offered to get for them civilian clothes, so that, with reasonable luck, they could get through Holland without being interned. I shall never forget their indignation. They thought that I was advising them to desert, and for a moment or two there was a reasonable chance of one of the men using his bayonet on me. However, I established my good

faith. But the men would not take my advice, safe and comfortable though it was, and insisted on making an effort to get back to their division. I heard of their fate afterwards. They encountered the German pursuing forces between them and the British force. One was killed, the other seriously wounded and taken prisoner by the Germans.

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King Albert of Belgium was the heroic figure of the Belgian Army. When that army took refuge in Antwerp the German Zeppelins began their attacks on the city. The first was clearly aimed at King Albert and his family. Passing over the forts around the city, the airships penetrated to its centre and aimed their bombs at the King's palace. This was quite clear when the track of the bombs was investigated the next day. Common talk among the Belgians that day was that the Germans, recognising King Albert to be the centre of the Belgian resistance, had decided on his destruction. It was reported that King Albert intended, with his family, to take refuge in England, and popular opinion acquiesced in that course. Later, it was announced—and I shall never forget the thrill with which Antwerp heard the announcement—that King Albert would never leave Belgium until peace was signed. His queen, fit mate for him, returned to his side at Antwerp after a hurried journey to England to place the children in safety.

Through the following days of fluctuating hopes and fears, the days of the Aisne and the Marne, the days when Paris was abandoned by the French Government, the days when nameless horrors were

inflicted upon the Belgian civilian population by the Hun invaders in order to compel the Belgian Army to make peace, King Albert was a constant inspiration to his people. I saw him almost daily, for he was always in the front line with his army, encouraging, exhorting, advising. Subsequently on the Yser I encountered King Albert, still brave, undismayed, leading the remnant of the nation, a true shepherd of his people.

Head-quarters were at Furnes. King Albert and his queen lived in a little villa on the coast. He came into Furnes early every morning and took charge. The work of his army—staff work and visits to the trenches—kept him busy until night fell, and then he went back to his villa. Holding the Yser line was a desperately hard task for the outnumbered and wearied Belgians. It would never have been possible but for the personal devotion and courage of the King. The great room of the old Town Hall at Furnes provided a fine setting for the knightly figure of King Albert. It dated from the time of the Spanish occupation, and was draped in gilt and stamped leather work of Cordova. Near the great open fire-place—where rarely could a fire be raised to mitigate the rawness of the December air, for fuel was scarce—King Albert sat before a great oak table and received the reports of his staff. Then he would go forward to the firing line to visit the troops in the trenches. He was perfectly cool under fire, seemed simply not to notice shell or bullet.

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During those first four months of the Great War when I was war correspondent and not soldier

I happened to be on three different occasions " up for trial " with the Belgians, the French and the British. Only in the case of the British trial was I even technically at fault, and yet it was the only time that I felt quite confident of getting an unflurried fair deal. The circumstances are worth recalling as illustrating that utter confidence one gets that the English *must* play fair because it is their nature to, and that they will take the necessary time and trouble over a matter to see what *is* fair.

While were fought those gallant actions in front of Tirlemont, not far from Haelen I got the noose almost around my neck. I had left my car at Tirlemont and gone forward on a push-bike to reconnoitre towards the German front. After about fifty kilometres, mostly over *pavé* roads or sandy side-tracks on a hot August day, I turned into a little *estaminet* to seek a cup of coffee. The keeper of the place recognised that my French was of a foreign brand, concluded I was a Boche spy, and quietly sent out for some Belgian cyclist scouts who were doing good work in the neighbourhood against the Uhlans.

I had just called out a complaint as to the delay in bringing the coffee when my arms were seized from behind. Not having had an early training as a horse thief in the Wild West of America, I failed in the etiquette of such occasions, which is to throw up one's hands. Instead, I struggled and tried to reach for my papers, showing that I was a British correspondent duly authorised to be with the Belgian army. My captors thought I was struggling for a weapon, and were within an inch of pistolling me on the spot. But, excellent

lads, they had a respect for their leader, a Captain Daufresne of the Belgian cavalry (before the war well known as a competitor at London Olympia). Having a respect for him, and he being absent, they wished to keep me for hanging in his presence as an *apéritif* before dinner.

I was kept, and the rope was got ready. Soon Daufresne arrived. There was no hanging. Instead, we had a very pleasant dinner together that night at Tirlemont. But for an hour or so, without feeling any bitterness at all against my Belgian captors, I did feel profoundly uneasy, and did feel a forlorn wish that I was in English hands, for that would have meant fair, patient trial.

My next appearance on the threshold of the scaffold, so to speak, was a few days later. Tirlemont had fallen, also Louvain, and it was clear that Brussels was doomed. I was anxious to see how things went at Namur, and motored south towards that citadel. I encountered a cordon of Belgian posts, set (as I afterwards found) by a French cavalry division. The post did not want to let the car through, but my Belgian chauffeur, doing as he thought his duty, urged that I was allowed everywhere, and we went on to the head-quarters of a French cavalry division, which was having on that day a particularly bad time with the Germans. Promptly on arrival I was put under arrest in custody of a French non-com. My Belgian authorisation was sniffed at. This was now a French military area. I must stay and be dealt with by the French general. He did not know when; perhaps in a few days. Meanwhile, my car would come in useful to the army.

As a concession I was allowed to be imprisoned

in the Mayor's house, and it was not uncomfortable waiting in the mayor's best parlour, until the local inhabitants, hearing that a " German spy " had been arrested, came to ask news, and the Mayoress in the next room explained things. She kept explaining things to an endless round of callers. So far as I could make out, the Mayoress thought my mien was not particularly villainous, but that I must be a spy, for my papers had been examined and yet I had been arrested.

" *Pas de bons papiers?* " she would say with a note of final doom. After about a score of repetitions, that " *Pas de bons papiers* " got on my nerves. Besides, Brussels was going to fall that night in all probability, and I wished to be in at the death. Further, the Mayoress seemed to be convinced that I was going to be shot in her best parlour, and was gruesome in her speculations about the effect on the carpet.

I broke arrest, left the Mayor's house and went up the street of the village to the head-quarters of the French division, resolved to have another try to get out. It was a false move. At first, however, it looked promising. A French officer was distinctly sympathetic. He was sure that when the Colonel returned all would be right. Meanwhile I could wait outside a little café, which was head-quarters. I did, and the inhabitants took up an attitude of armed neutrality. It was better than the Mayor's parlour and that infernal chant of " *Pas de bons papiers.*" But when the brigade Colonel arrived he was in a very bad temper, and had other things to trouble about than a person under arrest.

" Put him in the guard-room," he said, without

listening to any explanations or so much as glancing at me.

The guard-room was a sort of stable at the back of the café. It had iron grills in place of windows. It was not a comfortable place. The townspeople were quite sure now that I was a German. They assembled at the grills and practised long-range spitting at me. The French soldiers came in batches to see the "Boche spy" that had been caught, and the non-coms. practised pistol flourishing in my face. They never actually fired, but at times I almost wished they would. With the long-range spitting and the short-range pistol practice, I felt unhappy, distinctly unhappy. And again I had the thought: Why cannot other people behave like the English?

At last a French officer came in, quite a Piccadilly dandy type, monocle in eye. Drawing a bow at a venture, I called out to him: "I swear you speak English."

"Of course I do," he answered. "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

The rest was easy. He was a good sort. He was interested to learn that Brussels was going to fall. He got my case through within an hour to the general, and I was summoned before him, and he knew me, or politely professed to know me, and within a very little while, after going through certain formalities, I was released, car and all, and on my way to Brussels, which did actually fall to the Germans the next morning.

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To make the round of experience complete, I managed next to fall into the hands of the British

Provost-Marshal. Brussels had fallen, Antwerp also, and the Belgian army was in refuge behind the lines of the Yser, with Furnes as head-quarters. I lived at the same little inn with some of the Belgian general staff officers, and had a pretty free leg, though officially frowned upon by the British Mission with the Belgian army. One day I cycled up to Ypres to lunch with some English officers, really ignorant that Ypres was not a Belgian but a British army area. A very pleasant lunch at the Golden Lion was not unduly disturbed by the bombardment, one of the early bombardments. But a French interpreter, overhearing my chaffing talk with the English officers about newspapers, reported to the Assistant Provost-Marshal that "there was a war correspondent in the town."

The Assistant Provost-Marshal sent for me, asked for my card, then informed me that, as I was a war correspondent found within the British lines, it was his duty to expel me to England. Now I was technically in the wrong. I had no business to be there. But I was quite confident. I was with the English, and I was sure of a fair deal. I argued with him, gently at first, that I was a war correspondent with the Belgian army, duly authorised by them, and only in Ypres to pay a call on some English officer friends. He was obstinate. He "had no discretion," he said. I retorted that obviously he had not.

To save me from going to general head-quarters under close arrest, an officer, whose brother had been an old friend of mine in Australia, motored me down to St. Omer, and there I was delivered into the hands of the Provost-Marshal. He talked the same talk about expulsion, though I was quite

tired of the subject. I stoutly maintained that it could not be done, and evoked the sacred shade of British fair play.

"You may talk for an hour, and it will make no difference."

"I am willing to talk for four hours rather than that British justice should be outraged."

That shook the Provost-Marshal a bit evidently. Finally he said he would put the case before the Commander-in-Chief. "Not that it would make any difference. We always expel war correspondents caught in our lines, and we have two under arrest now to be expelled to-morrow. And you will find that you will go with them."

To have carried the matter to the highest court of appeal was a point gained, and I was content for the moment.

"Then what time shall I report to you in the morning?"

"Oh, we take care of you," said the Provost-Marshal grimly.

A corporal conducted me to St. Omer Military Barracks, allowing me to buy a tooth-brush on the way (I had no kit at all with me). At the barracks there were, I was told, two other war correspondents, one American. They had been rather emphatic in their protests, and I believe they were in the cells. But I sought out the sergeant-major in charge, was civil to him, and he made me free of the sergeants' mess and assigned to me the best bed in the barracks. Then he accepted my invitation to come to dinner in the town with his senior sergeant.

"Bring your ball cartridge," I added.

It was a very good dinner and very good wine,

but I believe that either sergeant would have shot straight enough if I had tried to escape (which was very far from my thoughts. Was I not in the hands of the English ?).

Back at the barracks, after a tot of army rum (which was excellent stuff in those days), I had thankfully turned in, when a messenger came that I was wanted by the Provost-Marshal. I am not sure, but I think I left those sergeants under the impression that I was to be shot that very night. At any rate, one remarked as I left :

" Poor ——! They might have let him have his night's sleep."

The Provost-Marshal had capitulated to reason. I was to be allowed to go back to Furnes, and " as I might not be altogether comfortable at the barracks," he had sent for me to recommend a good hotel and to offer me the services of a soldier batman until my departure.

The next day the Provost-Marshal took me in his own car to Calais on the way to rejoin my Belgian friends. He was very nice about it all, but naturally a little disgruntled that the action of his subordinate at Ypres and his own early decision had been upset. At Calais he got a little of his own back.

There was at Calais then, and probably still is, for such folk live almost for ever, a splendid ruffian of a cabman, one of those large, hairy French cabmen in whose beard rooks had nested ; whose dog-hide coat was originally torn from a Cerberus and had been scorched by the fires of Hades ; whose bold eye had seen all wickedness ; whose brazen throat had known all liquors ; an absinthe-soaked, mud-bespattered cabman. Yet, with all, a cabman of noted parts. He knew me, had had

more than one good tip from me, and came now sweeping the ground with his hat.

"Bonjour, Monsieur Fox!"

"Ah," said the Provost-Marshal genially, "a brother correspondent, I presume?"

Afterwards, as an artillery officer, I called on that Provost-Marshal at St. Omer, and he enjoyed having the incident recalled. I can never forget it, for, though the regulations were against me, I had felt confident all the time that because I was in English hands I would have the advantage of the "equity of the case"—and I had.

During that time I was in the hands of the Provost-Marshal's Department, I had another chance of seeing the English spirit of fair play in working. Regulations forbade the keeping of pigeons. Some peasants near Ypres had been arrested and brought in with a fine stock of pigeons that they were keeping. On trial before a Provost-Marshal's officer they made it quite clear that they were innocent of all ideas of espionage and that they had not heard of the regulation. They were acquitted. The pigeons, were, of course, destroyed, but they were paid for at the price the peasants asked, and then, rather than let the accused tramp the dozen miles to their home, they were sent back in a motor-car.

This was the time of the first battle of Ypres, when the English army was hanging on desperately by its eyebrows to the awful salient. Now would any other people have given at such a time that quiet, even-headed, sympathetic, London-police-court consideration to offenders accused of a very serious crime?

CHAPTER XIII

ENGLAND IN THE GREAT WAR

After the battle of the Yser in December, 1914, I "joined up." Through a friend in the War Office I put forward the suggestion that I should be given a Secret Service task in the Balkans. When I was with the Bulgarian Army in 1912, I had made many friends in that country. In particular I had become acquainted with the head of the Bulgarian Secret Police, and I had reason to believe that he was rather well disposed towards me.

My view of the Bulgarian position was that, in so far as the Bulgars were fond of anyone but themselves, they had a certain respect for the English, and would have more confidence in fighting on the side of the English than on the side of the Germans. But I knew that King Ferdinand of Bulgaria was completely in the hands of the German Powers. True, he had gone against their wishes by bringing his country into the Balkan League in 1912, but the motive of that (as was afterwards found out by the disclosure of the secret Russian archives) was a personal bribe paid to him by the late Czar of Russia.

When accepting the throne of Bulgaria it is alleged that King Ferdinand was warned that Balkan political methods did not exclude assassination, and that he replied: "If there are to be any

assassinations, I shall take care to be on the side of the assassins." He certainly observed that policy; but he found it an expensive policy. The army of Secret Police which he kept up had to be paid for, and, though King Ferdinand had large estates in Hungary, by 1912 his private affairs had become embarrassed. The Russian Government came to his help with a "private loan," and he brought his country into the Balkan League. That did not, however, prevent him, in 1913, from behaving treacherously towards Russia, towards his Allies and towards his own country in the cause of German ambitions. It is not difficult to guess that at that time Germany had become the private paymaster of the impecunious and treacherous King.

In 1914 I was convinced that King Ferdinand would take the earliest opportunity in his power to serve his German masters. I had no illusions about the character of the Government of Bulgaria. There were in Bulgaria, I knew, democratic institutions, voters, a Parliament, but the Government was essentially autocratic. King Ferdinand and his Secret Police were the only people who mattered.

It was my intention, if I had been allowed, to go directly to the head of the Secret Police, who was an acquaintance, if not a friend, and put to him directly—with the best arguments, financial or otherwise, that I could advance—the wisdom from the Bulgarian point of view, of getting rid of King Ferdinand. If he had been put across the Austrian frontier and somebody called to authority in Bulgaria who would study the interests of Bulgaria and not of Germany, I thought

the position in the Balkans could have been secured.

Of course the idea was in a sense a wild one. There were a hundred chances to one that a man going on a mission of that sort would meet not with success but with an unobtrusive funeral. However, it seemed to me worth trying. I was not allowed to try it. I dare say that authority at this time was plagued by a thousand and one people with wonderful schemes for helping to win the war. So I had no resentment at my failure to get this particular notion attempted.

I was drafted into the Royal Artillery, as I had had some small experience in the Australian Field Artillery Militia, and given the rank of Lieutenant (which I found meant doing Captain's work). There were posts offered me in London which were possibly more suitable for my age, but I was anxious that I should be allowed service in the field, not in an office.

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Whatever sense of humour I was gifted with, was needed to the full during the time that elapsed between reporting for duty at Aldershot and getting out to France. There were three strong reasons why I could not fall easily into the proper frame of mind for a soldier, which is that of a cheerful, Dr. Pangloss, acceptance of everything as being the best of all possible arrangements. I was forty. I was a journalist—which is a critical rather than an acquiescent calling. I was an Australian.

Still I did my best and so far as outward signs of obedience and respect were concerned I think

that I did not fail. But in my own secret mind it was impossible to be happy about the working of the organisation of the new armies. A year or so before, Lord Roberts, despairing of getting a scheme of universal training for war service adopted, had implored the British Government at least to lay in a store of a million rifles and a thousand field guns, so that in the event of a European war, there would be at hand some of the apparatus of training. His plea was ignored. Now a people aroused were rushing to the Colours and were being accepted for service when they could be provided neither with uniforms nor with arms, nor even with such camp accommodation as would give them the first elementary ideas of a soldier's life.

It seemed to me a stupidly cruel thing to take these men from the workshops and to enrol them with the Colours under conditions which were so profoundly demoralising. They could not be trained: they could not even be disciplined after any reasonable plan. Surely, it would have been better policy to have organised the majority of them to provide in the first instance the materials of war, and to have only called up as many as could have been given some sort of training?

More than once it was my duty in England, as temporary O.C. of a battery in training, to try a "deserter"—some excellent Englishman who had volunteered for service, had found himself without uniform, without arms of any sort, without barrack or camp accommodation, "camping out" in an empty house, and who had taken the opportunity of a week-end leave to stay away. On being brought back he would plead that he had joined

up to become a soldier, not to live a life which struck him as being idle and meaningless and shiftless. It was impossible to punish harshly "deserters" of that kind. One could only warn them, hope and pray for some sort of material to give them the beginnings of a real training, and then try to maintain their interest in a military life by route marches with educational lectures on artillery work.

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Commanding officers were sometimes trying. One gentleman, who was my Colonel for a time, was a typical English squire whose idea of being an artillery territorial officer had been that guns and gunners were invented to give another chance to the noble horse to display his good qualities. How that man plagued me and how I must have plagued him! He rode perfectly in the best English manner: and I had the idea that if you could keep on your horse and get there, the niceties of hunting-field and Rotten-Row style did not much matter. At one time (in an English training camp) this Colonel kept me a long stretch of days in the riding school to teach me to salute gracefully with the sword on horseback, whilst I was straining at the leash to teach the men some of the little I had learned in old militia days and on the battle-field with the Belgians about artillery work.

I was stupid, wilfully, wickedly stupid, not much better than mutinous to him; and he was thoroughly exasperated with me. Yet he was just and a gentleman and simply *could* not do anything that was unfair.

One incident which showed this was not altogether welcome. Some young officers in the camp had been kicking over the traces in Folkestone. There were scandalous stories of officers careering along the sea front on motor-bikes with baggages (not baggage, peroxided baggages) on their pillions. A parade of the junior officers of Colonel ——'s brigade was called, mounted order with swords. He—after all due formalities of salutes—began to address us. Then his eye caught sight of me at the head of the little line.

"Fall out, Mr. Fox."

More salutes.

"I want to say that nothing I am going to say applies to you."

Then he spoke in a fatherly way on morals and manners. He had recognised that I was an oldish man with serious pretensions to respectability and felt that I should not like to be included in the suspicion of touring Folkestone with peroxided baggages. His reading of human nature was wrong. The oldest and most respectable of us do not like to be stigmatised as irretrievably moral. But his motive was excellent.

Another exhibition of his justness was more grateful. The occasion was for confidential reports, and his report (he thought) had to be shown to me by regulations as he wished to record the unfavourable verdict that "I knew nothing about horses" (which was the truth in his mind, though to avoid mock humility, I may add that I had owned and ridden horses much of my life, sometimes riding one animal for a fortnight's hard constant trek and never had one that was not a happy friend). To this "unfavourable verdict" he had, however,

added statements about soldierly virtues he credited me with which strained the truth in the direction of panegyric.

Gallant, chivalrous gentleman—I hesitate to name him, but if he reads these lines he will know that the prickly Australian to whom he tried to teach the correct deportment of a horseman, regrets to this day that he did not show himself more amenable and more grateful.

During my four years in the army I encountered an occasional superior officer who was something of a tyrant and bounder: none was English; they all came from some other element of our Imperial race. Lest I be misunderstood, let me hasten to say that I do not wish to suggest that all, or any large proportion, of the O.C.'s I encountered who were not English were not "good sorts" on the whole. What I want to convey is that the rare cases of somewhat objectionable officers I met did not happen to include an Englishman.

* * * * *

Not only the justice but the good temper and kindliness of the English was always showing. I was looking at a prisoners of war "cage" at Meaulte, behind the Somme battle line, one day in 1916. Dinner time had come and the prisoners were receiving their rations. One, a typical Prussian officer, who had objected strongly to being put in the same enclosure as his men, refused to accept any food and sulked disconsolate in a corner of the barbed wire enclosure. A small group of English Tommies, not knowing the reason for his sulkiness, were expressing sympathy for him. One of the group, of the type of know-all, explained

the situation to his mates. "That chap," he said, "is a Prussian, and the Prussians only eat sausage, and the poor blighter can't get any." Another one of the group quite seriously suggested: "Couldn't one of us nip down to the canteen and buy him some?"

* * * * *

In hospital the English soldier was a very brave gentleman. I had good means to observe this late in 1916, when I was getting well after three tortured months of knowing nothing except how much pain one's body can hold, having been pretty thoroughly smashed up on the Somme. When you are getting well after a bad spell you have more clear insight than ordinarily. There is not such a layer of flesh over your sensibilities. That time of getting well was like my first spring in London after I had come from Australia, kingdom of the ardent sun. (In Australia we have no spring because we have no winter. We do not go down into the depths to come up from them again in a gush of renewed life.) In December the sky had spread a pall over London. The trees went to sleep under their sooty overcoats. The sun vanished; it seemed at times as if for ever; though at other times there stood for him in the heavens something that looked like an egg fried in a dirty pan. As dreary week followed dreary week, I wondered drearily why anyone was ever so foolish as to fight to keep an enemy out of England. How much more effectively hostile to let him come and make him stay there!

At last one morning I woke up with knowledge of a new unquiet feeling in the air and at a corner

of Hyde Park I saw, crackling like a *feu de joie* through the starved grass, crocuses. From then day followed day of keen delight. It was the spring. England showed her endearing charms in the hints and promises and half-assents of March, the jolly romps of April, the wanton delights of May.

Getting well was like that. After going down into the depths of pain and helplessness, there is a spring of life again. You march from the crocuses on to the daffodils and then to the roses; from bed to chair; from chair to your feet; and then one day out for a glimpse of the roaring world again. And always by your side, prompt with guiding hand is "Sister."

The English Tommy almost invariably took his sufferings with a good-humoured stoicism; and he was grateful in a real heart-felt way for all that was done for him. Certainly all that human skill, and kindness could compass was done for him. My own experiences as patient reminded me of the tale of the Old Man of the Mountain—one of those earnest and thorough fighting leaders of the early days of Mohammedanism—that he followed this plan of recruiting for his army: Healthy and active young men were raided from the villages, drugged and then taken to a valley. There all the enchantments of life awaited them. They were gorged with the pleasures of the senses, and told that this was Paradise, and the way to come back for ever was to die fighting for their chief. This lesson sufficiently learned, the recruits were again drugged and returned to their villages. No compulsion was then needed to force them into the fighting ranks; and in the battle line they had

no paltering notion of wait and see. They went in to hew hip and thigh.

As to whether this story is authentic I cannot say, but it often came into my mind whenever I had the luck to be sick or wounded. It was the open sesame to a spell of life as care-free, as luxurious, as pleasure-packed as any Sybarite could desire. It was—except, let me hasten to say, as regards houris—the life of the Old Man of the Mountain's Earthly Paradise, provided not as a bait, but as a consolation for those who were knocked out in doing their work at the front.

* * * * *

After being discharged from a surgical hospital in 1917, I was given a post for a time on the Whitehall Front writing books and pamphlets. The work assigned to me did not entail constant attendance at an office and I was able to accept an invitation from Colonel and Mrs. Hilder to stay at "Huskards," their house in Essex, a summer month; and do my little bit against the enemy from a pleasant camp in a rose-garden. They had turned "Huskards" into an Auxiliary Hospital, where forty to eighty convalescent "Tommies" found a gracious shelter on their way back to the front or to civil life.

There could be no better instance than this house of the spirit in which England carried on the war. The father was most of the time in France or Egypt fighting, the son in France fighting; Mrs. Hilder as matron, and her daughter as an assistant to the Nursing Staff, helped to carry on as a hospital their English home which, with its gardens, its tennis courts, and all its amenities, had been put

at the disposal of the men who had suffered sickness or wounds in the service of their country. There was nothing kept back from the men; they held their concerts in the drawing-room; a motor never went out except in their service; the food that they had was the same as that provided for the family; and if there were any rationing of bread or sugar in obedience to national needs, they were the last to feel the economy.

Talking with Anzacs there—about a fourth of the convalescents were Anzacs—I found all of them enjoying vastly this taste of English home life. Some of them had undergone a revolutionary change in their estimate of England, which they had thought a grasping, cold country, and had found to be a generous, warm-hearted country.

" It has upset all my little notions," said emphatically to me an Australian sergeant who had " done his bit " at Gallipoli and on the Somme.

He was more taciturn than explanatory, but I gathered that his old " notion " of England was of a land where Dukes and plutocrats paraded the thoroughfares in haughty state oppressing the poor and being as offensive as possible to the stranger.

Well, he knows England now a little better and recognises that an English home is something worth fighting for, whether it is in England or Australia. No soldier coming to that recognition wants other reward for what service he has done.

EPILOGUE

And the years to come ? There are clouds enough, threats enough. But I think these English people must win through : they are so brave, so good-humoured and so practically wise. They will learn that a people's foundations must rest in their farms : that it is foolish to have a great Empire and not use it to the best advantage of all its citizens. That will bring to them full security. They may even generally infect other peoples with their own good humour and fair play and so bring the world to peace.

THE END

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